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Instruction and Pedagogy For Youth in Public Libraries

Casey H. Rawson, Editor

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There seems to be little resistance to the idea that children and teens learn in public library spaces. However, many public librarians do not see themselves as teachers. This implies that much of the learning that happens in public libraries is incidental—tangential to the "real" purpose and design of these spaces and programs.

In this book, we make the case that public librarians should embrace an explicit instructional role as a core part of their professional practice. Inside, you'll find both a comprehensive review of what is known so far about instruction for youth in public libraries and a primer on core educational concepts and frameworks for current and future public librarians. Each chapter includes real-world examples of libraries and librarians who are already practicing powerful teaching.

We hope that this text will inspire a new group of students, practitioners, and researchers to expand on our ideas, create innovative forms of teaching and learning that are unique to public libraries, and engage all children and teens in powerful and meaningful learning experiences.

With Chapters By:

Jim Curry
Melissa Ferens
Tessa Gibson
Rachel Morris
Dezarae Osborne
Casey H. Rawson
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Edited by Casey H. Rawson, Ph.D.
UNC Chapel Hill · School of Information and Library Science

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the creative, committed, and courageous public librarians who are already embracing the instructional role, and to the equally creative, committed and courageous students who will soon join them.

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About This Book

This textbook was collaboratively written by the instructor and students of a graduate-level course titled *Instruction for Youth in School and Public Libraries*, taught in Fall 2017 at UNC Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science (SILS). After struggling to find a text that comprehensively addressed teaching and learning in public libraries, the instructor (Dr. Rawson) decided to make the publication of such a text the final project for the course. Other than Dr. Rawson, all chapter authors were SILS master's students at the time of writing. Dr. Rawson and the students worked together over the Spring 2018 semester to edit the text and prepare it for publication. Collectively, the authors and editor represent a wide variety of academic and professional backgrounds, interests, and skills:

- **Dr. Casey H. Rawson** is a Teaching Assistant Professor at SILS, where she teaches research methods and youth services courses to MSLS and MSIS students. She also works with Project READY (projectready.web.unc.edu) to create racial equity-focused online and face-to-face professional development for school librarians and other educators. Her research interests include equity and inclusion in youth services librarianship, support for STEM instruction in school

and public libraries, and education of LIS professionals. She has written, taught, and presented widely in these areas. Dr. Rawson holds a Ph.D. and MSLS in Information and Library Science from UNC Chapel Hill, an MAT in Middle Grades Education from the University of Louisville, and a BS in Biology from Duke University. Before pursuing her MSLS, she was a middle school science teacher.

- **Jim Curry** is a dual-licensed Technology and English Language Arts educator from Arkansas and a graduate of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science Master's Program. Jim loves incorporating fandom and STEAM education themes into library settings and has created and executed escape room and Harry Potter-themed programs for public libraries. Jim has worked as the digital intern for Charlotte Mecklenburg Libraries and with Dr. Brian Sturm's Story Squad to create a digital collection of stories for children told by students. Jim is currently a Youth Librarian with the Fayetteville Public Library in Arkansas.
- **Melissa Ferens** is a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science. She received her undergraduate degree in Information Science, also from UNC SILS. After earning her MSLS, she hopes to work as a youth librarian in a public library. Melissa is passionate about social justice and equity, the cultivation of youth agency and critical literacy skills, and the transformative power of literature.
- **Haley Young Ferreira** is currently a master's student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science. She is earning her MSLS,

and she hopes to work as an elementary school media specialist after graduation. Before attending UNC Chapel Hill, she received her undergraduate degree in Communication and Creative Writing from Queens University of Charlotte. She is interned at Club Boulevard Humanities Magnet School. She volunteers for Carolina Friends School Lower School Library in Durham. Haley is passionate about how librarians can help in achieving equity for youth in school, particularly regarding literacy development and access to information.

- **Tessa Gibson** is a master's student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science. A former Child & Family Interventionist, Tessa's work with children and their families inspired her to pursue her MSLS. She is interested in how public libraries in rural communities meet the needs of underserved youth. Tessa is currently collaborating on a paper with Dr. Vanessa Irvin, an assistant professor at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. After earning her MSLS, Tessa hopes to work with rural public libraries to create an innovative approach to outreach and youth services.
- **Rachel Morris** is pursuing a master's degree at UNC Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science, where her interests run widely across the spectrum of studies. She received bachelor's degrees in English and Media Studies from UC Berkeley and graduated from the 2018 Odyssey Writing Workshop. She has worked at the Chapel Hill Public Library in youth services. She is interested in diverse art, media, and technology, especially regarding equitable access to resources and information.

- **Dezarae Osborne** is a second-year MSLS student in the School Library Media track at UNC-Chapel Hill. She currently works as a Youth and Family Experiences Assistant at Chapel Hill Public Library and School of Information and Library Science Library. She has previously worked at the House Undergraduate Library at UNC and the Veterinary Medicine Library at North Carolina State University as a Graduate Assistant. Dezarae's research interests include diverse and #ownvoices literature, the #metoo movement in children's literature, youth services, and the impact of public libraries in rural communities. She is also interested in summer library learning programs, especially those set in school libraries and other community centers. After graduating in December 2018, Dezarae plans to work as a youth librarian in either a school or public library setting.
- **Mara Rosenberg** is a former elementary school educator and master's student at UNC-Chapel Hill. She believes in the power of story. Mara has seen students gain empathy when they met characters who represent the many ways of being human. She knows that stories prepare children to be in the world. Through critical questioning and perspective taking, readers grow in their humanity. She serves on the AASL/ALSC/YALSA School Public Library Cooperation Interdivisional Committee. She plans to work as a school media specialist applying her passions for literacy and social justice.
- **Ness Clarke Shortley** is a former journalist and newspaper editor; she's currently a master's student at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science. She is interested in how to make school

libraries and collections more inclusive and welcoming to disabled students; collaboration among school librarians, classroom teachers, and public librarians; and using fanworks in the classroom. Ness is currently working on her master's paper delving into representations of disability in kidlit and the relevance of reviews. She is a member of the 2019 Odyssey Award selection committee. She hopes to work as a middle school librarian after earning her MSLS.

- **Brittany Soder** is a master's student at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. She is interested in how the role of the librarian is shifting to include more instructional opportunities throughout the job market. Within the discussion of instruction, Brittany is interested in creating equitable learning environments for marginalized students in libraries. She has taught in university, public, and school libraries. Brittany is currently working on her master's paper, researching how public librarians are fostering youth activism and advocacy in their programming for teens. After completing her MSLS, Brittany hopes to work as a school librarian, inspiring, and teaching the youth of tomorrow.
- **Rachel~Anne Spencer** is a master's student at the UNC Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science. She is earning her MSIS and is particularly focused on user experience and human computer interaction. She serves as president of the Information and Library Science Students Association (ILSSA), secretary of the UNC-Chapel Hill student chapter of Association for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T@UNC), and Secretary of the Future Leaders in User Experience (FLUX), of which she is also co-founder. She graduated with honors and distinction from

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a Bachelor of Science in Information Science and a minor in creative writing. She is currently working part time at the SILS Library and is conducting her master's project (and volunteering) through the Community Workshop Series. Rachel~Anne is enthusiastic about instructional design, adult computer education, helping to bridge the digital divide, and making the systems and processes through which we learn more user-friendly.

- **Alexa Dunbar Stewart** is a master's student at East Carolina University's Library Science program. She is interested in rural communities and the digital divide as it affects the school system and its students. Alexa is currently working on a grant for her local library to help increase information literacy in a rural community. After she completes her MLS, she hopes to work as a school librarian in a rural community in Western North Carolina.
- **Gina Wessinger** is a master's student at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill in the School of Information and Library Science. After working with children and teens for several years in the summer camp setting and having the opportunity to hear their stories, Gina is interested in promoting student voices through programming and collaboration with teachers, public libraries, and other community organizations. She is also interested in diverse and #ownvoices representation in collection development and the ways that accurate and inclusive representation can support student goals and interests. After earning her MSLS, Gina hopes to serve as a school librarian.

Introduction
Why Us? Why Now?

By Casey H. Rawson

On a February night in Reading, Massachusetts, fourteen tweens and teens arrived at a YMCA gym, where they were greeted by two teen librarians from the Reading Public Library, the YMCA's teen director, and five members of the Boston University Quidditch team. For the next two hours, the teens entered the fictional world of Harry Potter by forming teams, participating in clinics where they learned the basics of their chosen positions, and then playing an actual Quidditch game, complete with brooms. This program met all the benchmarks of success typically applied to a public library event: it was well attended (registration was required, and there was a waitlist); it was well reviewed by participants, library staff, and partners; it led to numerous future events with the BU team; and, of course, it was fun (according to feedback from participants and library staff).

But this program wasn't *just* fun. By adding just a few features to the program design, teen librarian Renee Smith ensured that the Quidditch clinic would also teach students valuable information literacy skills. While planning the program, Smith (a former teacher) set four objectives for the event:

1) introduce teens to the sport and larger community of competitive Quidditch;
2) develop teens' skills on how to play various positions (both defense & offense), plus have them learn the rules and objectives of the game;
3) engage teens in a collaborative and teamwork spirit; and
4) connect teens with literature in a unique way by evaluating how real and fictional versions of the game compare (Smith, 2017, personal correspondence).

These objectives guided Smith as she planned the program's structure. They also align with information literacy standards included in national guidelines for school and academic librarians. For example, standard I.D.3 from the most recent AASL Standards Framework for Learners (American Association of School Librarians, 2017) specifies that learners can "enact new understanding through real-world connections" (p. 1)—like the connections Smith wanted participants to make between a fictional game and real-world practice.

To assess participants' progress toward these goals, Smith observed them informally during the program and included a sharing circle at the end of the event in which participants verbally shared what they had learned with each other and with the facilitators. Smith recalled:

> It was amazing to hear them describe their experience in person. I feel they walked away with an understanding of how to pursue opportunities for further play, how to setup [sic] a game themselves, how to play each position, and a true appreciation for the fictional game in the books. (Smith, 2017, personal correspondence)

There seems to be little resistance to the idea that children and teens learn in public library spaces. Academic and practitioner journals often highlight the public library's role in literacy development (e.g. Campana et al., 2016; Caputo & Estrovitz, 2017; Estrovitz, 2017), information and media literacy (e.g. Nielson & Borlund, 2011; Valdivia & Subramaniam, 2014), and STEM / STEAM (e.g. Barlett & Bos, 2018). However, many public librarians do not see themselves as teachers. This implies that much of the learning that happens in public libraries is incidental—tangential to the "real" purpose and design of these spaces and programs.

In this book, we make the case that public librarians should embrace an explicit instructional role as a core part of their professional practice. We acknowledge that this would represent a significant shift in the professional identities of public librarians. However, in making this shift, public librarians would be following in the footsteps of both academic and school librarians, whose instructional roles are widely acknowledged now but are relatively recent additions to their professional responsibilities (Gilton, 2012). In fact, the shift toward taking on a greater instructional role is already underway, as illustrated in the most recent professional competencies documents from both the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA).

Compared to the 2009 ALSC *Competencies for Librarians Serving Children in Public Libraries*, the 2015 update includes an expanded focus on instruction for youth in public libraries, including knowledge of educational frameworks and collaboration with other educators. See Table 1, page xi, for a

comparison of the 2015 and 2009 competencies related to instruction. In this table, N/A indicates that the 2015 competency was a new addition to the document.

Compared to the 2010 version (Flowers, 2011), YALSA's 2017 document "Teen Services Competencies for Library Staff" shows an even greater shift toward public librarians as instructors than is evident in the ALSC documents. YALSA's competencies were completely overhauled in 2017; two out of the ten major content areas in this document now focus explicitly on instruction (Content Area 3: Learning Environments [Formal and Informal] and Content Area 4: Learning Experiences [Formal and Informal]). In addition, instruction and knowledge of educational theory are embedded into several of the remaining content areas as critical components. For example, within Content Area 9: Outcomes and Assessment, librarians are asked to "select and use results from assessments in planning and implementing learning activities" (YALSA, 2017, p. 5). At several points in this document, the authors emphasize that learning in the public library should happen year-round, not just during summer reading programs. Both the ALSC and the YALSA competencies will be discussed further in Chapter 1, where we explore what these documents say about the content—the "what"—of public library instruction.

Even as we argue that public librarians should embrace the label of "teacher," we also acknowledge that the public library is not a traditional learning environment. Both school and academic libraries can be considered sites of *formal* learning: structured learning that takes place in an educational or training institution, is recognized by relevant authorities, and can result in a diploma or other qualification (UNESCO, 2012). Decades of

Table 1. ALSC Competencies Related to Instruction, 2015 and 2009

2015 Competency	2009 Competency
I.4: Understands theories of infant, child, and adolescent learning, literacy development and brain development, and their implications for library service.	I.1: Understands theories of infant, child, and adolescent learning and development and their implications for library service.
I.5: Understands current educational practices, especially those related to literacy and inquiry.	N/A
II.2: Instructs and supports children in the physical and digital use of library tools and resources, information gathering, and research skills, and empowers children to choose materials and services on their own.	V.1: Instructs children in the use of library tools and resources, empowering them to choose materials and services on their own.
III.1: Designs, promotes, presents, and evaluates a variety of programs for children, with consideration of developmental stages and needs, interests, and goals of all children, their caregivers, and educators in the community.	VI.1: Designs, promotes, presents, and evaluates a variety of programs for children of all ages, based on their developmental needs and materials and interests and the goals of the library.
III.2: Acknowledges the importance of physical space to engage and foster learning, and establishes appropriate environments for programs that respond to developmental needs and abilities.	N/A
III.4: Integrates literacy-development techniques in program design and delivery, engaging and empowering caregivers in a culturally competent way.	N/A
III.7: Delivers programs outside or inside the library to meet users where they are, addressing community and educational needs, including those of unserved and underserved populations.	N/A

research have given us a relatively rich understanding of how teaching and learning happen in this type of space. More recently, a large body of research has contributed to our understanding of *informal* learning: unstructured, often spontaneous learning that occurs in the course of daily life and through the motivations and activities of individual learners (UNESCO, 2012).

Public libraries do not fit neatly into either the formal or informal learning categories. Unlike in formal settings, learning in the library is typically non-sequential and voluntary, and it is often not assessed. Yet, in contrast to informal learning, learning in the public library is often preplanned, with a recognizable structure, and guided by a teacher (the library staff member leading the experience). Educational researchers have proposed the term *non-formal learning* to describe this phenomenon (see Table 2, below, for a summary of the three types of learning).

TABLE 2. FORMAL, NON-FORMAL, AND INFORMAL LEARNING. ADAPTED FROM UNESCO, 2012 AND ESHACH, 2007.

FORMAL	NON-FORMAL	INFORMAL
Usually at a school or training institution	Usually at an institution outside of school	Can take place anywhere
Usually results in formal certifications	Can sometimes lead to certifications	Does not result in any certification
Guided by standards	May be guided by flexible standards	Not guided by standards
Prearranged	Usually prearranged	Spontaneous
Compulsory	Usually voluntary	Voluntary
Teacher-led	Teacher- or learner-led	Learner-led
Sequential	Usually non-sequential	Non-sequential
Learning outcomes are assessed	Learning outcomes not typically assessed	Learning outcomes are not assessed
Learner motivation typically extrinsic	Learner motivation can be extrinsic or intrinsic	Learner motivation is typically intrinsic

Compared to both formal and informal learning environments, we know much less about best practices for teaching and learning in non-formal environments. What we do know is that each of these three settings offers unique opportunities, challenges, and mechanisms for teaching and learning. In this book, we have aimed to maintain a focus on what makes public libraries unique instructional sites, while also seeking places where our knowledge about other types of learning environments might be effectively applied in these spaces.

A NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY

Like other professions, education has its own language—a lexicon that is sometimes called "eduspeak" by those wishing to point out its tendency toward jargon. Though it may be true that education is plagued by an overabundance of buzzwords and passing trends, it's also true that there are core concepts and frameworks in the education field that have remained stable over time. Knowledge of these core concepts, and the ability to "speak the language" of educators, is one of the hallmarks of the teaching profession. Therefore, in accordance with our assertion that public librarians should embrace the label of "teacher," we have not shied away from using educational terminology (for example, "differentiation," "culturally sustaining pedagogy," and "constructivism"). In recognition of the fact that many public youth services librarians may not have academic or professional backgrounds in education, we have taken care to define these terms and provide examples of their use in public library settings.

Part of the shift toward public librarians viewing themselves as teachers will involve coming to see the children and

teens with whom we interact as something other than resource seekers and program attendees. When writing this text, we struggled with what to call these children and teens— "students" seemed too firmly connected to formal academic settings, and "users" seemed too passive to capture the active role that young people play in creating their own understandings within a learning environment. We compromised on the term "learner," which we felt is less suggestive of a school environment but still appropriate for the scope of potential activities these young people might undertake in a public library.

WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS BOOK

This textbook was conceived as both a comprehensive review of what is known so far about instruction for youth in public libraries and a primer on core educational concepts and frameworks for current and future public librarians. The intended audience for this text includes graduate or undergraduate students training to work with youth in public libraries and practicing youth services librarians seeking to improve their own understanding of instruction and pedagogy.

In the first chapter, we discuss the content of public library instruction—what, exactly, can and should public librarians teach to children and teens? The following chapters introduce readers to a variety of frameworks, theories, and methods that can help them plan, implement, and assess instruction in a public library setting. Each of these chapters includes real-world examples of how public libraries are already applying these concepts successfully with children and teens. The final chapters explore ways that public librarians can continue to grow as instructional

experts and advocate for the importance of the instructional role in their libraries, in their local communities, and more broadly.

Throughout the text, we have endeavored to maintain an appreciation for the diversity of public libraries, librarians, and the children and teens who visit them. Along with YALSA and ALSC, we share a commitment to "recogniz[ing] … systems of discrimination and exclusion in the community and its institutions, including the library, and interrupt[ing] them by way of culturally competent services" (Association for Library Service to Children, 2015, Commitment to Client Group section). As the field of public librarianship develops its own frameworks for instruction and pedagogy, there is a window of opportunity for us to collectively design a system that does not replicate the race-, gender-, class-, language-, and ability-based inequities that are embedded in formal learning systems. Doing so will require us to have a shared understanding of both traditional and critical approaches to teaching and learning, which is part of what this book aims to provide.

The process of weaving instruction into the fabric of youth services librarianship is only just beginning, and we are excited to contribute a new strand to this effort. We hope that this text will inspire a new group of students, practitioners, and researchers to expand on our ideas, create innovative forms of teaching and learning that are unique to public libraries, and engage all children and teens in powerful and meaningful learning experiences.

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Chapter 1
What Can Public Librarians Teach?

By Jim Curry & Casey H. Rawson

It's a Wednesday afternoon at the public library. A children's librarian leads a storytime for elementary-aged students in the program room; a small group of teens works together to create a zine in the library's makerspace; a boy asks a library staff member how to find new graphic novels to read; and a teen librarian chats with a cluster of high school students about their homework. This is not a school building. There's no classroom or homework or examinations. There probably aren't any formal lesson plans or schedules. And yet, in each of these interactions and activities, there is the potential for learning to occur.

When I (Jim) was a student teacher in my last semester of my undergraduate degree and started to consider Graduate School for Library Science, a part of me worried I wouldn't have the same impact on kids and teens as a librarian that I would as a teacher. Only now do I realize that "librarians" and "teachers" are not mutually exclusive terms. Gone are the days when librarians' only responsibility was to check out books to patrons. More than 100 years ago, John Cotton Dana, one of the first city librarians,

said, "The public library is a center of public happiness first, of public education next," (Dana, 2015). This remains true today as we strive to both cater to the existing interests of library patrons and expose them to new experiences and skills. Librarians are developing more formalized roles as instructors in academic, school, and even public libraries. In this chapter, we will explore the instructional role of public librarians with an emphasis on what exactly they are teaching.

To give us some context for this discussion, we'd like to share an extended example of one ongoing public library program in Charlotte, North Carolina. As you read about this program over the next few pages, ask yourself: what are participants learning by attending this program?

Spotlight: Dewey and Dragons

By Jamey Rorie, Teen Specialist at Beatties Ford Regional Library, Charlotte, NC

I have advocated for benefits of gaming in the library when it comes to young patrons since starting my position as a teen specialist. When I came to Beatties Ford, I wanted to start a Dungeons and Dragons (DnD) group for teens, but there were doubts about interest because of the population we serve. The Beatties Ford Road area is a low-income part of Charlotte; most of the families in the area are working class

Image (dice) by Derek Palladino from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

and African American with not much opportunity for economic mobility. Many of our teens have never heard of role-playing games (RPGs), let alone Dungeons and Dragons, so it was several years before I actually went through with planning for Dewey and Dragons.

The program started about a year ago when one of my regulars expressed an interest in DnD. He had never played himself but had heard about it from one of the gamers he watched on YouTube and wanted to play. I have been familiar with DnD for some time and knew that the skills associated with playing would make it an easy pitch to my team lead and supervisor. Fostering imagination, acute problem-solving, storytelling, quick math, and teamwork were all goals that I pitched to my superiors, who allowed me to run the program. Our first attendees were the initial teen who was interested and two of his friends.

Now, we hold Dewey and Dragons every first and third Thursday. We have a volunteer Dungeon Master who is excellent at teaching newcomers and handling veterans. Our volunteer comes in and prepares for the upcoming session, and our teens come in later and begin the campaign. There is a recap of the previous session, and those who are new to the group are given premade characters and a general idea of how to play. The sessions last for two hours, and we livestream them to our Facebook page. After the session, our volunteer asks newcomers if they are interested in creating a character for next time and goes through a step-by-step explanation of building their character. A lot of our teens model their

Teens at the Beatties Ford Road Regional Library participate in a Dewey and Dragons session. Photograph provided by Jamey Rorie.

characters after manga that they are reading or anime they are watching and continue developing their character over time. Some of our more artistic teens have drawn their characters and posted them online. The ability to take this personal avatar that they created and help shape the game's story is really appealing to our teens. If a teen makes it to two sessions in a row, they are given a set of dice of their own. It's our way of welcoming them to the group officially.

Since starting Dewey and Dragons, we have grown from three players to an average attendance of seven teens per session. We have also had adults participate. The teens who participate have been our best advertisements. Other teens have seen them playing and wanted to know what it was

about. On many occasions, we have had upwards of 12 teens show up to play. The success has led to a new problem of too many players for our volunteer Dungeon Master to handle, resulting in us having to require registration and in some cases turn away teens who have shown up. We are looking into getting a backup Dungeon Master to prevent this (ideally, one of our teens).

After a session, I can hear our teens talking about their adventures. They discuss what they would have done differently and what they are planning to try next time. Most are used to reading stories, watching movies, or playing videogames that have a set ending and story beats. But with DnD, they determine what happens to their character along with others who have that same sense of freedom. They get to determine how the world sees their character and how they or their character would react to a certain situation. Would they play it out strategically, or would they go in sword swinging and face the consequences? There have been long debates at the table of what an action could result in, not only for the individual but also for the group as a whole. A number of my regulars have started reading fantasy-based material, like the manga *Re:Zero* and *Sword Art Online*, or graphic novels and books based off of Dungeons and Dragons, like the *Legend of Dirizzt*, as a result of our program. Some who have never considered reading or interacting with the fantasy genre have shown interest in relation to DnD.

FINDING THE "WHAT" OF PUBLIC LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

In a formal educational setting, identifying the content that is taught and learned—the "what" of instruction—is a straightforward task. The school day is divided into segments by subject area; each subject area, in turn, is shaped by a set of standards that set the benchmarks for what students should know and be able to do as a result of a lesson or unit of instruction. These standards are neatly organized by grade level and often packaged within a pacing guide that tells teachers which standards they should focus on in each part of the school year. For example, the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010) states that by the end of third grade, students should be able to "ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers" (p. 14).

Instruction within school and academic libraries is also governed by one or more set of learning standards. In K–12 school libraries, these are typically the *National School Library Standards* (American Association for School Librarians, 2017) or a state-specific alternative. Academic (college level) library instruction is guided by the Association of College and Research Libraries' (2015) *Framework for Information*

STANDARDS VERSUS CURRICULUM

In education, the term "standards" refers to a set of benchmarks that specify what learners should know and be able to do at each grade level. "Curriculum" is what actually happens in the classroom to help students reach the standards. Any given standard can be taught and learned in a variety of ways; it is the teacher's job to translate standards into curriculum.

Literacy for Higher Education. Like other standards documents written for formal learning environments, these texts define the "what" of instruction in school and academic libraries (we will look more closely at the content outlined in these documents later in this chapter) .

At least for now, public libraries lack a centralized set of learning standards that might help us understand and guide the content and skills that are taught in these spaces. However, the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) recently took a major step toward the creation of such a document with its 2018 release of the *Teens First: Reimagined Library Services for and with Teens* infographic (https://bit.ly/2kuUdoD) and learning outcomes (https://bit.ly/2EgqUvP).

YALSA describes the *Teens First* infographic and accompanying resources as representing a "paradigm shift" for public libraries (Young Adult Library Services Association, 2018b, para. 1). The infographic describes six target areas in which public librarians can contribute to teens' growth and development: Leadership, Learning, Community, Creativity, Digital Citizenship, and Literacies. For each of these target areas, YALSA has written 5-9 possible learning outcomes "to assist library workers in

Public Library Standards

The closest analog that the public library world has to an official set of learning standards is the *Teens First: Basic Learning Outcomes* document released by the Young Adult Library Services Association in 2018. This document is a good place to start when exploring the question "what can public librarians teach to children and teens?"

setting learning goals for teen programs" (Young Adult Library Services Association, 2018a, p. 1). For example, in the Creativity domain, one learning goal is for teens to be able to "create original work or responsibly remix existing content to make something new." Additional learning goals from this document will be discussed later in the chapter. The YALSA learning goals are written specifically for teen learners; there is no current equivalent for children's library services. However, many of the YALSA learning goals would be appropriate for planning children's instruction, as well.

In addition to these YALSA documents, professional competencies documents published by YALSA, the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), and the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) also allude to the content that can be taught in a public library context. These documents all describe benchmarks for public library services to children and teens rather than learning goals for the children and teens themselves. However, by looking at the standards in these documents that address education, we can begin to get a sense of the content and skills that these organizations describe as the "what" of public library instruction.

The most recent ALSC competencies document (Association for Library Service to Children, 2015) includes several statements related to the instructional role of public librarians (for a complete list of these, see Table 1, p. x). Among these are Competency 2 in the Reference and User Services category, which states that a competent children's services librarian "instructs and supports children in the physical and digital use of library tools and resources, information gathering, and

research skills" (n.p.). Literacy development is also included in this document as an area in which public librarians play an instructional role.

As noted in the introductory chapter, the 2017 YALSA competencies documents include a greatly expanded emphasis on the instructional role of public librarians compared to the previous iteration of this document. In the introduction to the "Learning Experiences (Formal and Informal)" section of this document, the substance of what public librarians can teach to young adults is clearly stated:

> Library staff provide formal and informal learning experiences for teens resulting in teens' ability to construct their own learning about topics that are important to them, build non-traditional and "non-tested" skills and literacies, develop 21st-century skills, content knowledge, and expertise, engage in peer-supported learning, and connect with a broader community of others interested in the same topics. (Young Adult Library Services Association, 2017b, p.9)

In addition, the YALSA document also states that in the public library, teens can "develop social competence … imagination and creativity … creative skills and multiple literacies" (pp. 7–8). Finally, YALSA asserts that in the public library, teens can learn "critical thinking, problem-solving, intellectual openness, and multiple literacies" (p. 9).

The IFLA guidelines for library services to children and teens were last revised in 2003 and 2009, respectively, and offer less guidance on the content of public library instruction than the ALSC and YALSA documents. This is not surprising, since the public librarian's instructional role has only just begun to be seriously

discussed by other professional organizations within the past few years. Still, IFLA's *Guidelines for Children's Library Services* (2003) does state that libraries should offer "training in library skills and information literacy" (p.13), while the *Guidelines for Library Services to Young Adults* (2009) asserts that libraries should "assist young adults in acquiring the skills to effectively access all library resources and become information and computer literate" (p.3).

Looking holistically across these documents, three categories of learning goals are apparent: goals related to information literacy, goals related to traditional literacy, and goals related to dispositions. In the remainder of this chapter, we will discuss each of these categories, referring to the Dewey and Dragons example and bringing in other real-world examples to highlight how these learning goals are already being translated into instruction in public library settings.

INFORMATION LITERACY

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (2017) defined information literacy as:

> knowing when and why you need information, where to find it and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner. Information literacy has relevance for democracy and active citizenship and is something which happens or needs to happen outside of formal education and throughout an individual's lifetime as well as within educational institutions. (n.p.)

As this definition points out, information literacy skills are critical not only in the classroom but also in daily life. Formal research of the type conducted in school settings is only one application of

information literacy skills. Other, arguably more critical, applications include finding, evaluating, and using information in daily life; organizing and managing personal information; understanding how, why, and to what effect information (such as news reports) is created and shared; and acting on information to build communities, engage in activism or advocacy, and improve one's own life. It is with these personal and community-oriented applications of information literacy, which are not currently emphasized in school settings, where the public library can have the most impact. For an example of this type of activism-based instruction, see the spotlight box on pages 17-18.

Out of the 40 learning outcomes that YALSA identified as part of their *Teens First* initiative, 14 relate to information literacy. These outcomes state that teens should be able to:

- display an ability to communicate with others;
- create original work or responsibly remix existing content to make something new;
- demonstrate technology use that is safe, ethical and responsible;
- leverage digital tools to broaden their perspective;
- build and manage their online identity;
- manage personal information to protect privacy and security;
- respect intellectual property;
- think critically about digital tools and their use;
- sharpen academic skills (e.g. study skills, research, reasoning);
- use materials and tools for developmental, educational and recreational needs;

- express themselves on a variety of platforms;
- create content to demonstrate meaning;
- select platforms and tools for communication; and
- articulate their learning to peers and adults (Young Adult Library Services Association, 2018a, p.1).

Many of these information literacy goals relate to technology. Just as our library spaces have changed over the years, so, too, have the ways in which we access and interact with materials. The number of digital resources (e-books, music downloads, movie streaming, etc.) libraries circulate has grown exponentially and continues to do so. Technology is constantly changing, and people must adapt and learn to keep up. Many will turn to first to their local library to access and become proficient in these ever-changing technologies. For kids and teens, new technology can't come fast enough. But as YALSA reports, "data suggests that while teens are comfortable with new technologies, they are not always as technically savvy as adults believe them to be" (YALSA, 2017a, Digital Literacy section), so it is important for library staff to avoid "digital native" assumptions.

TRADITIONAL LITERACY

Libraries of all types have long been associated with books, and even as libraries have expanded their resources and services, reading remains a core focus of our services. However, librarians are not reading teachers; our role in literacy development is not to teach the mechanics of reading and writing. Instead, librarians serve as curators, connectors, and catalysts, helping to engage learners with texts. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) states that librarians should "initiate

and elevate motivational reading initiatives by using story and personal narrative to engage learners. [They] curate current digital and print materials and technology to provide access to high-quality reading materials that encourage learners, educators, and families to become lifelong learners and readers" (American Association of School Librarians, 2017, p.3).

When we explore the question of what public librarians can and should teach related to traditional literacy, we need to be sure to keep this distinction between reading teachers and librarians in mind. Rather than teach learners how to read and write, our role as librarians is to teach them how to identify their own reading and writing interests – in part by exposing them to as many diverse texts and writing styles as possible. Existing programs like summer reading challenges already exemplify this type of learning in public library settings.

DISPOSITIONS

Formal learning is typically focused on content that is external to the learner—content that improves the learner's understanding of the world around them. In contrast, when we teach for *dispositions*, we are helping learners understand and improve themselves and their communities. A disposition can be defined as a characteristic attitude, outlook, or habit of mind. Since dispositions are not usually explicitly taught in formal learning environments, this is an area where public librarians can make a significant impact in the lives of their young learners.

The YALSA learning goals released in 2018 place a major emphasis on dispositions, with a majority of the document's 40

goals listing at least one. Some of the dispositions included among YALSA's desired learning outcomes are:

- Empathy
- Respect for differences
- Openness to learning
- Cross-cultural understanding
- Flexibility
- Innovation
- Openness to risk-taking
- Self-confidence
- Positivity
- Perseverance
- Curiosity
- Self-awareness
- Personal expression

DISPOSITIONS IN ACTION

One disposition that is fostered through the Dewey and Dragons program (profiled on pages 2-5) is **personal expression.** By developing and playing with their own unique avatars over an extended period of time, teens are provided with an outlet for artistic expression and identity exploration.

Compared to a program that aims to teach students a discrete skill or piece of knowledge, planning for programs and experiences that will help learners develop these dispositions can be challenging. Later in this book, we'll discuss instructional planning and design frame-works that will help you plan for this type of learning. For now, consider the Dewey and Dragons program highlighted at the beginning of this chapter. What dispositions are learners strengthening through their participation in this program, and how does the design of the program foster that growth?

When dispositions are used to formulate learning goals, it is important to keep in mind that this type of instruction may be

especially prone to deficit-based thinking that blames children and their families for perceived character flaws (for more on deficit- vs. asset-based instruction, see Chapter 5). Take, for example, the much-debated concept of "grit." Psychologist Angela Duckworth, the most famous proponent of the concept, defines grit as "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthew, & Kelly, 2007, p. 1087). Teaching and assessing for grit has become commonplace, especially in high poverty schools. Many researchers have pointed out problems with the grit narrative, however. These scholars argue that the concept of grit romanticizes suffering and hardship and places the responsibility for changing those conditions on the people living in them, rather than on the inequitable and oppressive systems that created them in the first place. In addition, the discussion of grit within the education field has been almost entirely focused on students in poverty and students of color, implying (incorrectly, according to existing research) that wealthier white children already possess this disposition (Strauss, 2016).

This cautionary advice is not meant to discourage you, or our professional organizations, from including dispositions as a key component of the "what" of public library instruction. Objections to the grit narrative are not focused on the concept itself – young people *do* need perseverance and passion. Instead, these objections are focused on how the concept has been used as a tool to perpetuate damaging narratives about poor students and students of color. As you explore how you might teach these dispositions to your public library learners, ask yourself: am I assuming the best about the children and teens in my community? Am I teaching this skill in an equitable and culturally sustaining

way? The material in Chapter 5 of this book will help you answer those questions.

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM OF THE LIBRARY

So far in this chapter, we have focused on the content, values, and perspectives that we might explicitly set out to teach in public library spaces – what we could call the "formal curriculum" in educational terms. While it's necessary and valuable to spend time thinking and talking about this formal curriculum, we also need to attend to the "hidden curriculum" within our libraries – "the unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives that students learn" in a particular environment (Great Schools Partnership, 2014, para. 1). In any learning environment, students will absorb not only what we overtly set out to teach them, but also "lessons" such as how they should interact with others in the space, what behaviors are considered acceptable, what expectations adults have for them, and how to view and respond to cultural differences.

Consider a library programming space where learners are greeted with a large poster listing prohibited behaviors in the room ("No food," "Leave cell phones outside," etc.). Inside the space, the walls are decorated with "Read" posters, all of which feature white celebrities. A security guard hovers just outside the space. The librarian leading the program does not ask for or use participants' names, and all the materials used within the program are written by male authors. Although that program might have been intended to teach a skill, such as research strategies, that is not all learners would take away from such a program. They may leave with the understanding that the librarian assumes or fears

that they will behave badly, that the library doesn't value individual children or teens, or that the library doesn't value the contributions of diverse cultures.

When we plan instructional experiences in our library, regardless of their format, we need to consider not only the overt content we intend to teach, but also the implicit content that we may communicate through our own behavior, the library's policies or space, the materials we use, and the structure of our programs and services. For more information about the hidden curriculum and how to identify the messages your library might be sending, visit the *Glossary of Education Reform*'s entry on this concept at https://bit.ly/2C0qKwM.

Teaching in the Context of Teen Advisory Boards

Teen Advisory Boards (TABs) are a common form of ongoing programming offered at many public libraries. Teens or tweens involved in their library's TAB may participate in a variety of activities, from providing input on collections to influencing library policy.

In one public library, the focus of the TAB has shifted from advising to activism. After the shooting at Orlando's Pulse Nightclub in 2016, the teen group at Kitsap Regional Library in Bremington, Washington, wanted to do more than discuss

Image (Protest) by BomSymbols from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

the tragedy—they wanted to do something about it in their own community. Assisted by librarian Megan Burton, the teens began planning issue-focused Teen Town Halls, creating service learning projects, and engaging with civic groups outside of the library to affect change in their communities (Burton, 2018). Read more about the Kitsap Regional group at https://bit.ly/2NRf5Sg. Within this one context, teens are learning in all three domains identified in this chapter: information literacy, traditional literacy, and dispositions.

Information Literacy

Looking at YALSA's learning outcomes related to information literacy, it's easy to see many connections to the activities of the Kitsap Regional TAB. Through their preparation for and participation in the Teen Town Hall events and the service learning projects, teens are learning how to communicate with others, leverage digital tools to broaden their perspectives, sharpen their research and reasoning skills, use existing materials in new contexts, express themselves in digital and face-to-face environments, and communicate their learning to each other and to other community members.

Traditional Literacy

TAB members read and write widely to prepare for the group's activities and community initiatives, which strengthens their traditional literacy skills and exposes them to new forms of literacy. This practice both reinforces and expands the traditional literacy instruction these teens are receiving in their formal learning environments.

Dispositions

Teen Activism Boards like Burton's seamlessly incorporate learning related to dispositions alongside more content- and skill-based instruction in information and traditional literacies. Through their work with the TAB, teens:

- build empathy for others,
- practice innovative problem-solving,
- take risks to improve their communities,
- improve their cross-cultural understanding through interactions with diverse community members,
- develop perseverance through long-term commitments to issues they care about, and
- build self-confidence through successful advocacy work.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have explored the "what" of public library instruction—the content and skills that public librarians can teach to the children and teens they serve. While there is not yet a single set of official learning standards for public libraries, that does not and should not prevent us from seeing elements of our practice as instruction and devoting time to exploring what it is that we are teaching children and teens through our programming, resources, spaces, and services, and what we want to teach them.

The instruction offered in public libraries is not intended to replace the learning gained from education in schools or

universities. Instead, library instruction should supplement formalized education through free access to resources and services representing cultures and ideas patrons may have no exposure to otherwise. In doing this, we can create an informed public and support the mission of lifelong learning. Public libraries are unique learning environments, and our curriculum should be unique as well.

Once we understand what can and should be taught in a public library context, we must then focus on who it is that we are teaching within the library. As library professionals who serve the public, we need to be prepared to instruct a wide variety of learners with an even wider variety of interests. Our audience spans from babies to retired seniors—so pretty much everyone! No pressure, right? As Donna Gilton (2012) said, "Public library instruction can consist of different activities in the same time period for very diverse groups of people, different age groups and circumstances, as well as families and other groups in a completely voluntary setting" (p. 175). Knowing the community you are serving and their needs will help you craft curricula that will appropriately teach the material. In the next chapter, we will explore ways that you can get to know your learners collectively and as individuals, before exploring how to use that knowledge to plan relevant and powerful instruction.

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Chapter 2
Knowing Your Learners

By Rachel~Anne Spencer & Casey H. Rawson

Take a moment to reflect on the teachers and librarians who have shaped your life. What did they know about you that could have impacted the way they treated and instructed you? Can you think of a specific time that they used something they knew about you to improve your learning experience? Based on which examples came to mind, why do you think it might be important to know your learners?

Learning about the individuals and the communities we serve is a critical first step to effective instruction in the library. If we skip this step and design instruction based on our assumptions about children and teens and their communities—or, worse, if we don't consider their perspectives at all when designing instruction—the result is programs and services that, at best, work for only some of our students and, at worst, are actively harmful. Consider Brittany Packnett's keynote speech for the 2017 Knowledge is Power Program (https://bit.ly/2PpQzlv). Packnett describes the names she and her family members were known by and how being misidentified made her feel alienated and disengaged. Describing the degree to which her school didn't recognize value in some of the features she felt most integral to her being, Packnett

said, "My school was high on rigor, and low on love" (Packnett, 2017). Why? Packnett expertly answers the question: "It's because we forget discipline and authenticity can coexist." The point of her speech is to remind us that systematic oppression exists in such a way that many of our learners feel unwelcome and discriminated against because we are so focused on the idea that what we've learned is "right" and "professional" that we've forgotten the importance of treating students like individuals, rather than standardizing their learning.

Neutralizing and standardizing the way we teach doesn't combat systematic oppression; instead, it perpetuates it by assuming that privileged traits are the norm. Likewise, making assumptions about a student's ability to learn based on factors such as race, gender, and income level denies their individuality; as educators, we should be both challenging our perceptions of students and investigating how their circumstances affect the ways in which they learn (Strauss, 2013).

Research shows that positive, trusting relationships between educators and youth increase learners' engagement, motivation, and achievement (Baker, Grant, & Morlock, 2008; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson, 1999). Many learners do not want to learn *from* a teacher so much as they want to learn *for* a teacher (Delpit, 2012). Thus, the more we know about our learners, and the more we can show them that we view them as whole people, the better we can serve them. In the rest of this chapter, we will discuss what it means to know your learners in the public library setting and provide tips for building relationships with the children and teens you serve.

KNOWING YOUR SETTING: PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Unlike schools, public libraries do not have the same population of children and teens visiting every day on a predictable schedule. Nor do public librarians have access to much of the information that classroom teachers and school librarians have about their students, including a student's past discipline record, medical information pertaining to learning disabilities, or informal commentary from other teachers. These differences can allow for more long-term relationship building between school librarians and their students compared to public librarians and the learners who visit their libraries. However, this does not mean that public librarians are incapable of building relationships with their learners, or that it's impossible to find information about those learners.

One advantage that public librarians have over school librarians is that compared to learners in school libraries, there's a greater chance that learners in public libraries opted to be there. Though it isn't always the case (for example, kids might be forced to attend library programs by their parents), there is a much greater likelihood that learners in public libraries decided to visit the library. This is an important distinction to make because learners who are intrinsically motivated are often excited to learn, and may be more willing to share as well. Another advantage that public librarians have is that there is no grading or test-taking in the public library, and public librarians are not "in charge" of the learning process in the same way they are in a formal education environment. This more casual atmosphere can make it less intimidating for children and teens to open up to you, which means that trusting relationships may develop quickly in the public library.

The public library sees a wide range of ages, while the school library commonly sees only students within a set age range at a time. This can affect the way instruction is delivered in public library settings. While public libraries do have the option to set age limits for programs, these may not always be feasible to enforce. Say you're hosting an instructional event for upper-elementary-schoolers, and you have several parents show up with their upper- and lower-elementary-schoolers expecting the younger students to be allowed to participate with the older students. This is an implausible scenario for the school librarian, but a public librarian may need to consider modifying the activity or having an alternate activity for young children to do to accommodate both age groups.

Speaking of groups and interests, public librarians also have a unique opportunity to provide instruction for special populations, such as LGBTQ+ youth, autistic children, or Latinx teens (Hernandez, 2013). In a public school setting, outside of club settings, students are typically only separated into special populations for instruction based on shared academic needs (for example, self-contained classrooms for students with severe intellectual disabilities, or English as a Second Language [ESL] classrooms). Overall, this is a good thing, since educational research shows that, in general, heterogenous groupings of students work best for facilitating academic learning among all children and teens (see, for example, Wells, Fox, & Cordova-Cobo, 2016). Laws also require that schools maintain heterogenous groupings of students related to certain protected classes; for example, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbids schools from segregating students by race or national origin when making class assignments, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education

Act (IDEA) requires that schools place students with disabilities in the "least restrictive environment" appropriate for their needs, which often is as a classroom where they can be educated with nondisabled peers.

There is no doubt that, in many educational environments, diversity in terms of race, ability, language, gender, sexuality, and other characteristics is critical and valuable. However, there is also value in giving children and teens opportunities to learn with and from others who share identical or similar identities. Spaces where people who share one or more aspects of identity can come together are sometimes called "affinity groups," and their importance as sites for reflection, discussion, and support are well documented in research (e.g. Parsons & Ridley, 2012). Public libraries can facilitate learning within affinity groups in ways that school libraries cannot (at least during the regular school day; many school librarians do successfully facilitate student affinity groups afterschool or during other club times). For more on this, see the spotlight box on the next page.

Many other factors may come into play when looking at the differences between the settings of school and public libraries, even when examining these institutions within the same community. The number of schools compared to library branches may greatly impact the ratio of students seen in these settings. Hours, location, and access to public transportation are also relevant factors.

KNOWING YOUR LEARNERS COLLECTIVELY

There are a variety of factors that affect how people learn. Developmental needs, culture, and community assets are a few of the many variables that can impact how people absorb

information. Understanding the range of these variables within your community can teach you about the expectations of your learners and how to satisfy their needs and interests through programming and instruction. Before we discuss some of these categories, it is important to note that the information in this section explores differences on a group level. When making teaching decisions that impact individual learners, group-level information like this is valuable to be aware of, but it is important not to assume that any individual learner embodies a trait simply because they are a member of a larger group.

Spotlight: Black Storytime in Portland, Oregon

In 2010, the Multnomah County Public Library system used funds from a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant to begin an in-depth community analysis project aimed specifically at African American children and their families. This project was in response to reports that had recently shown wide gaps in social and economic outcomes for Black versus white families in the area.

After consulting community organizations, business leaders, local government agencies, library staff, and—most critically—African American parents and grandparents in the community, the library district decided to develop a new

Image (fairy tale) by Laymik from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

program series titled "Black Storytime." This program, developed by public librarian Kirby McCurtis, features culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate books, music, and activities designed specifically to support Black children and their families.

While the library did receive some pushback, most notably from a local conservative talk-show host, the program has been a huge hit with Black families, who have described the program as powerful, forward-thinking, affirming, and nurturing (McCurtis, 2017). For a list of some of the books that McCurtis has shared during Black Storytime, check out the resource guide at https://bit.ly/2MHeExq.

Developmental Needs

In most states, preservice classroom teachers and school librarians are required to take coursework related to child development. Typically, there are not similar requirements for preservice public librarians, so at least at first, it can be a challenge to know what content and skills are appropriate to teach to what age or ability levels. Complicating this evaluation further is the fact that within a given age range, learners can vary widely in terms of their readiness for the content. In school settings, some learners are labeled as "exceptional children," which can mean that they have a physical or cognitive disability that impacts their learning or that they have been identified as academically gifted. These labels can be problematic; for example, research has shown that students of color are underrepresented in both special education (disability services) programs and in programs for gifted

youth (e.g. Cosmos, 2016; Samuels, 2017). Moreover, labels such as "special needs" or "exceptional" can create distance between disabled students and their nondisabled peers by othering those deemed "special" (Linton, 1998). However, they do at least provide classroom teachers and school librarians with a place to start in terms of gauging the developmental readiness levels of their students.

In the public library, you probably won't know about your learners' disability status when they first show up to a program, and that lack of knowledge can be a great opportunity for you to focus on seeing each learner as an individual rather than as a diagnosis. Of course, that does not mean that you shouldn't learn about various disabilities and other developmental needs that might impact your instruction and relationship building. Disabled learners may not feel comfortable disclosing their disability status to new adults in their lives and should not be burdened with having to educate librarians about their disability. Instead, librarians should take on the responsibility to educate themselves about the range of disabilities they may encounter among their learners.

To better understand the needs and desires of learners with disabilities, librarians could partner with disability activists in the community and build trusting relationships with disabled people. Disability awareness training is also highly recommended, as it specifically addresses both discrimination and stereotype issues, as well as providing general instruction on how to work with and understand people with a variety of disabilities and accessibility needs. It is also a great idea to partner with schools to learn more about what students are learning at each grade

level and how classroom teachers accommodate students with disabilities.

In public libraries, we need to assume that our learners will come to us with a wide range of skills. While this seems daunting, it can also be an opportunity to facilitate collaborative learning and cultivate empathy and respect for differences among our learners. Taking an asset-based approach to developmental differences will help us look for the strengths of each learner we encounter.

Demographics and Culture

Knowing the demographics of the community you serve is an important first step in understanding what their needs may be—although, again, it is critical not to make assumptions about learners based on demographic information alone. Knowing the basics about your community's racial and ethnic makeup, economic status, religions, and geography can help you identify the types of instruction and resources patrons might find relevant and useful. To know these is to have a starting point for understanding what might draw your patrons in, make them feel comfortable, and foster their identity development. Examining demographic data may also raise your awareness of systemic inequality issues that may impact the learners in your service area.

Take race into consideration. Some people don't believe racial inequality is still a problem in education, but as prominent researcher and author Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) described, students of color in this country are still owed an enormous educational debt by a system that has failed them for generations. One lingering example of this debt is the disparity in the amount

of money schools in lower income (often Black and Latinx) districts spend on students in comparison to wealthier districts. In the United States, the most recent educational funding data available from the federal government shows a national funding gap of $449 per student when the 25 percent of school districts with the highest amounts of student poverty are compared to the 25 percent of schools with the lowest amount of student poverty. For many states, the numbers are even worse: In Illinois, per-pupil spending in low-poverty districts is $16,375 per student, compared to only $13,885 in high-poverty districts—meaning that Illinois's poorest students, who are disproportionately students of color, are funded at a rate that is nearly 18 percent lower than their wealthy peers (Barshay, 2018).

This isn't even half of the race issue. Remember the example Packnett offered of her childhood and the pressure to conform to a name that wasn't hers? Now take that example and increase it to the point where systemic racism isn't only a mentally taxing barrier but also physically hinders a student's education. Imagine you're 15-year-old Zion Agostini, a Black teen who is harassed because of the color of his skin on his way to class—and perhaps even within it (Anderson, 2016). He described the weight, not only of understanding that he's not the "default" student, but also of being racially profiled and patted down by police on his walk to school and even targeted as he passes through the metal detector leading into his school. He's consistently late for class for these reasons and falling behind because of it. How can we supplement his learning in our public library spaces and help him succeed? Zion and millions of young people like him are being held back by a system of oppression and knowing this is the first

step to developing a plan for eliminating that oppression in the library setting and fostering growth and learning.

Related to but distinct from race, culture is a wide category encompassing all the ways that a particular group of people experience and behave in the world. Typically, we think of culture being inherently tied to race, ethnicity, and religion, but it can include a variety of identities ranging from sports and music to family position or level of academic interest. Showing interest in your learners' cultures and planning instruction that validates and sustains those cultures is necessary to make sure you respect them and understand their strengths and motivations. When working with learners from a different cultural background, understanding their culture helps you communicate your expectations and positively relate to them. We will explore much more about culture in Chapter 5.

Community Assets

When they're not at home, in school, or at the public library, where do children and teens in your community spend their time? What resources, including human resources, exist in the community around your library that might impact the types of instruction you can and should provide? If you happen to live in the community served by your library, you may already know (some of) the answers to these questions. However, many librarians live outside of their library's service area or in a part of the service area that may not represent the whole.

You, or your library as an organization, may have completed a community analysis process in the past or may have ongoing community analysis efforts in place. When thinking about

instruction, it's important for those efforts to include an analysis of the assets present in the community that might help you understand and build relationships with children and teens you want to teach. For example, the Boys and Girls Club in your community might know a lot about a group of learners in your community who may not typically visit the library and may help you connect with these learners in a space where they feel comfortable. A local knitting group may present a great opportunity for an intergenerational instructional program: The adults could teach teen participants how to knit, while the teens teach the adults how to use Ravelry (a free online community for knitters and crocheters, https://www.ravelry.com/).

Figuring out which assets are present in your community does involve some legwork—literally! Experts in community analysis suggest that a *community walk* is one of the best ways to understand a community. Community walks are typically group activities in which representatives from an organization (in this case, the public library) walk through a community alongside people who live there to get a first-hand understanding of the community, its assets, and its people. For guidance on planning, conducting, and analyzing the results of a community walk, check out the Participatory Asset Mapping guidebook from the Advancement Project and Healthy City, online at https://bit.ly/2BQwQvt.

KNOWING YOUR LEARNERS AS INDIVIDUALS

Once you have some sense of the range of learners that are included in your library community on a collective level, it's time to start getting to know individual learners on a personal (but

still professional) level. From asking simple questions and jotting down observations to getting the whole community involved in a Community Assessment, there are plenty of ways you can approach this task.

Interviews

The best way to find out about your learners as individuals is to go straight to the source by interviewing them. These interviews can be formal or casual, and you can interview learners individually or in small groups. Interview questions can be very specific—"What's your favorite YouTube channel right now?"—or broad—"What makes you happy?" Consider writing down or otherwise recording the answers you receive to these questions. If you can remember a specific child's interest and bring it back up in conversation with them later, it shows them that you care about them as an individual and that you consider their interests valid and important.

Products of Learning

Often in the public library, our programming and instruction is production-centered: Learners create and share something during the experience. Planning for open-ended activities is a great way to get to know your learners while instructing them. For example, if you lead a fanfiction writing workshop, allow the participants to choose their own source material to write about, and ask them what they love about that source material. You may find that you share some interests with your learners, which is a great way to start deeper conversations that can lead to ongoing relationships. Poetry slams, photography

workshops, maker events, and similar programs where participants can create or share things based on their personal experiences and interests are great opportunities to better understand your learners as individuals. For an example of how one library learned about its teens through production-centered programming, see the spotlight box below.

Spotlight: Making Zines in Anaheim

Staff members at Anaheim Public Library (APL) knew their teens needed a creative outlet and wanted to provide that for them. They also knew their teens came from many cultural backgrounds and that many of them were bilingual, so they chose a zine (short for magazine) project to allow them to interpret their cultures and languages through poetry, collaging, short stories, and drawing. Zines are self-published works that usually consist of a series of collages that mix both original and repurposed images and text.

Because the program focused on self-expression, the APL librarians were able to learn a lot about the teen participants. Through experimentation and exploration, the teens also learned more about themselves during the zine creation process. Librarian Emily Otis explained:

Image (magazine) by Ralf Schmitzer from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

> In the course of our program, we discovered that many of our teens didn't feel comfortable expressing themselves, perhaps because they were unfamiliar with how to do so, because they were shy or scared to expose personal things. So, the workshops also became very much about finding a form of expression each individual felt comfortable with and asking questions to encourage them and draw them out. While we set out to teach teens how to make a zine, I believe we were most effective on a more fundamental level in teaching them how to bravely create, experimenting to find the best outlet for their voice. (E. Otis, personal communication, September 19, 2018)

By keeping track of who (rather than how many) attended each workshop and discussing the scheduling with their learners, the APL librarians discovered that the five-week series they had originally intended for the program wasn't a good fit for their learner's busy schedules. Rather than abandoning the zine program, APL staff started a zine collection in the library and developed workshops for teens to learn how to create single-page zines, which could be completed in a single session. In 2018, the library hosted its fifth annual OC Zine Fest (https://anaheim.net/5005/OC-Zine-Fest), featuring panel discussions, workshops, and an open mic zine-reading hour. For more about APL's zine-making programs, watch this video produced by the library: https://bit.ly/2NficWW.

Leave the Library

Not all children and teens feel comfortable or welcome in the library space, and some children and teens may not be able to reach the library because of transportation issues. It can also be easier for some children and teens to talk to adults when those conversations take place outside of the adult's work domain and the perceived balance of power is more equal. So, leave the library! Set up a book display in the mall, or partner with another organization to lead library programming in their space. Outside of work hours, consider attending extracurricular events featuring your learners; when children and teens see you at their band concert, basketball game, or cheerleading competition, they know that you care.

Want More Ideas?

Education experts have lots of advice for getting to know your learners as individuals.

- Five Easy Ways to Connect with Students by H. Richard Milner IV, https://bit.ly/1PhNqsb
- 7 Ways to Build Better Relationships with Students by Stephanie Shaw, https://bit.ly/2ybiqVq
- 10 Ways to Build Relationships with Students This Year by Genia Connell, https://bit.ly/2sUoDpy

Leaving the library can also include meeting learners where they are digitally. Are your teens constantly checking Snapchat on their phones? Do your tweens spend hours watching YouTube gaming channels? When you notice that your learners are spending a lot of their time on a particular network or

platform, you should consider whether and how the library might join them there in a way that maintains professional boundaries but also invites engagement and interaction.

Don't Forget About Parents

As you work to develop relationships with individual learners, don't forget to build positive connections with parents and guardians. In many cases, especially for younger children, the parents decide whether to bring their children to the library at all, so maintaining positive communication with parents is critical to the success of library programming. Parents also know their children well—in many cases, better than anyone else knows them—and can share information with you that can help you plan and deliver the best possible instruction for your learners.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

As you get to know your learners collectively and individually, it will be critical for you to establish boundaries that keep your relationships with learners healthy and professional. This is often easier said than done, with behaviors like accepting a hug from a child, interacting with children and teens via social media, and complimenting learners on physical attributes occupying a large gray area where respected professionals may disagree about the appropriateness of certain actions.

Of course, your library's official policies should serve as a starting place for you to navigate these tricky waters. Many libraries have written guidelines dictating how you should communicate with library users both inside the physical building and online. These official documents can be helpful in establishing

bright-line rules of professional conduct, but they may be less helpful when, for example, a teen comes to you and shares that her mother has been diagnosed with cancer. Where is the line between showing this learner the empathy and care she needs and crossing a professional line?

In some situations, you will simply need to feel out your own comfort level and that of the learner as you go along. As college professor Kerry Ann Rockquemore wrote, "To be clear, I don't believe there's a right or wrong place to draw your boundaries. But it's important for you to make conscious, intentional and consistent choices about your boundaries" (Why Boundaries Are Important section, para. 3). To help educators in that task, Rockquemore suggested that they ask themselves:

- Where does my responsibility as a professional (in our case, as a librarian) begin and end? Another way to think about this might be, "What falls under my ability as a professional to address, and what might be better addressed by another professional such as a counselor or doctor?"
- What nonverbal cues are you sending to your learners?
- Do you know how to stop a conversation that begins to venture into uncomfortable territory?
- What structures do you have in place to communicate your boundaries?
- How do you feel when your own boundaries are crossed? Based on that, what are the signs that tell you a boundary adjustment is required?

As you develop individual relationships with your learners, you may find that they begin sharing information with you without

you asking. This is a sign that you have become a trusted adult in the child or teen's life; however, you also need to know how to respond if or when a child or teen shares sensitive personal information with you. Depending on the nature of that information, you may be legally required to report it to the proper authorities in your state. For example, if a child or teen tells you that they are being abused or neglected or that they are considering harming themselves or others, you have a professional and legal obligation to report that information. While only two states (Pennsylvania and Vermont) specifically list librarians as mandated reporters in their laws, several other states consider all adults to be mandated reporters, and all states allow for and encourage reporting from any source. To find out what the laws are in your state, visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway site: https://bit.ly/2jTdTkw.

The goal of establishing boundaries is to ensure that the learners you work with feel emotionally and physically safe in the library. For additional guidance in this process, check out *Boundary Training: Promoting Healthy Student-Adult Relationships* from EduRisk Solutions: https://bit.ly/2MFCWl9.

REFLECT

Now that we've discussed knowing your learners, take a few moments to reflect on what you already know about your students and what you have yet to learn. Though it may be difficult to plan for every student that walks into your public library, rest assured knowing you now have actionable steps to take towards cultivating a more tailored, inclusive, and affirming learning experience for your students.

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Chapter 3
Working Backward to Move Forward: Backward Design in the Public Library

By Gina Wessinger

"*What's the point?*"
"*When will I ever use this in real life?*"
"*Why should I care?*"
"*Does this even matter for me?*"

Each of these questions serves as an example of something many children, teens, and even adults often feel. "What's the point of cleaning my room?" "When will I ever use this [mathematical concept] in real life?" "Why should I care that Shakespeare wrote some plays?" "Does this [old dead guy] even matter to my life?" Sometimes, we have answers. "Well, if you don't clean your room, you might get an infestation of bugs." Sometimes, the answers are complicated to explain. "Well, if you decide you want to be an engineer, then you will have to take classes in college that will require you to call upon the knowledge you are learning right now about this math concept." Sometimes, our answers aren't enough. "Shakespeare's plays are considered classics that can still apply to our lives, and some even say that he changed the world!" Sometimes, we honestly have no good answer. "This old dead guy doesn't matter to your life. He led a group of people who were important at the time, but, unless you're

a contestant on *Jeopardy!*, he didn't do anything significant enough that it should matter to you at this moment."

Programming in the public library is no easy task. Programming and then being forced to justify everything we are doing in the program can be downright exhausting. As librarians, there are many factors that can inform our instruction, including information literacy standards, patron needs, and patron interests. After determining the topic or focus of a program, it can be tempting to jump right into the planning of an activity. Sometimes we create great programs this way. However, this method may not allow our programming to reach its greatest potential. What will improve programming the most is taking the time to decide exactly what students or participants will leave the program with (tangible or intangible) and how we will know that they have reached our goals. Making use of backward design in the program planning process will not only prepare us to answer any of the questions above, but it will also enhance the quality of programs, in addition to helping us grow as instructors.

Backward design was first introduced by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe in their 1998 text, *Understanding by Design*. Backward design is a framework for instructional design composed of three stages. The first stage involves determining the desired results of a lesson. In this stage, the instructor determines what they would like for their students to gain from the lesson. The second stage is all about assessment. The instructor identifies what will indicate that students have achieved the desired results. Any and all evaluation is developed during this stage. The third, and last, stage is devoted to what will occur during the lesson. It is in this stage that the instructor plans the activities, resources, and

methods of the lesson—the experiences through which students will gain the understanding and knowledge to achieve the desired results. Based on this structure, the goals of a lesson will inform the development of assessments and experiences. Thus, instructional goals remain at the center of the process (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

Backward design is a logical framework for instructional design, so it may seem strange that the word "backward" is part of its name. Backward can imply that this method is counterintuitive or confusing. However, that is not the case at all. Rather, according to Wiggins and McTighe (1998), "backward" merely addresses the fact that many instructors build lessons from the beginning around a beloved book or favorite activity instead of selecting those resources based on defined goals. Backward design calls for teachers to begin with the end, and then move backwards through a lesson by identifying desired results, developing the assessment, and then making a lesson plan. Considering assessment before actually planning a lesson is another justification for the term "backward" (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). It can be easy to consider assessment at the end of a lesson, but there are several benefits of making decisions about assessment, based on evidence of student learning, at the

Planning Tool

While it's unlikely that anyone will ask to see formal lesson plans for your programs, writing down your plans can help you organize your thoughts and can save you time later if you want to offer an old program again. To help you record these plans, we've developed a backward design template for public library instruction, which you can find on pages 64-65.

beginning. Contemplating these things can help clarify goals and define teaching, which ultimately leads to greater student performance (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

STEP 1: WHAT ARE MY DESIRED RESULTS?

The first step of this backward design process is all about defining the desired results of a lesson or program. This is the stage in which we define where we are going so that we can decide how we will get there. It involves *setting goals* and defining *essential questions*. This section will discuss how to define goals and write essential questions, and then we will consider why doing these things as the first part of the planning process is valuable.

Hey, What's the Big Idea?

Sometimes setting a goal can be easy; maybe we have plenty of information and indicators to point us in the direction we should be heading. As librarians, our goals may be informed by professional standards, learner feedback, previous experiences, or library-wide goals. Goals for a program can certainly come from any of these sources, but regardless of where the goal originated, what is important is that it focuses on the big ideas. According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), big ideas can help establish the learning priorities, which can really focus the planning of a lesson. Indeed, it is easy to get caught up in all the exciting parts of a subject area but trying to cover too much information can lead to confusion and little learning. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) remind us that identifying the big ideas can help clarify goals in a way that helps us resist overwhelming learners with "everything of possible value for each topic," which can be a challenge (p. 66).

A misunderstanding about big ideas is that they really do have to be big, or, rather, broad. However, a big idea does not have to be actually big; it just has to be central to the topic. This means that the idea has significance for the past, present, and future. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) said it well when they explained that a big idea "must enable the learner to make sense of what has come before; and, most notably, be helpful in making new, unfamiliar ideas seem more familiar," as a big idea serves as a "tool for sharpening thinking, connecting discrepant pieces of knowledge, and equipping learners for transferable applications" (p. 70). One way to think of a big idea for a lesson is to think of the spine of a library book; without the spine, a book would be a bunch of loose pages. The spine, however, not only reliably holds the pages of a book together but also gives information (author, title, shelf number) that will assist you in taking further what the pages have to offer.

Wiggins and McTighe (2005) offered a very useful diagram (Figure 1, next page) that can help narrow things down when defining big ideas and setting goals. This figure can be very helpful when trying to determine a topic's big idea. Outside of the outermost circle would be all extraneous information about a topic. Within the largest circle are the words "worth being familiar with," which would encompass anything about a topic that seems important enough for learners to encounter at least once during a lesson or unit. Next, we move into the middle circle, in which we find the words, "important to know and do." At this point, the information and ideas from the largest circle are narrowed to everything about a topic that learners need to be able to connect and transfer knowledge, skills, and concepts from this unit to another.

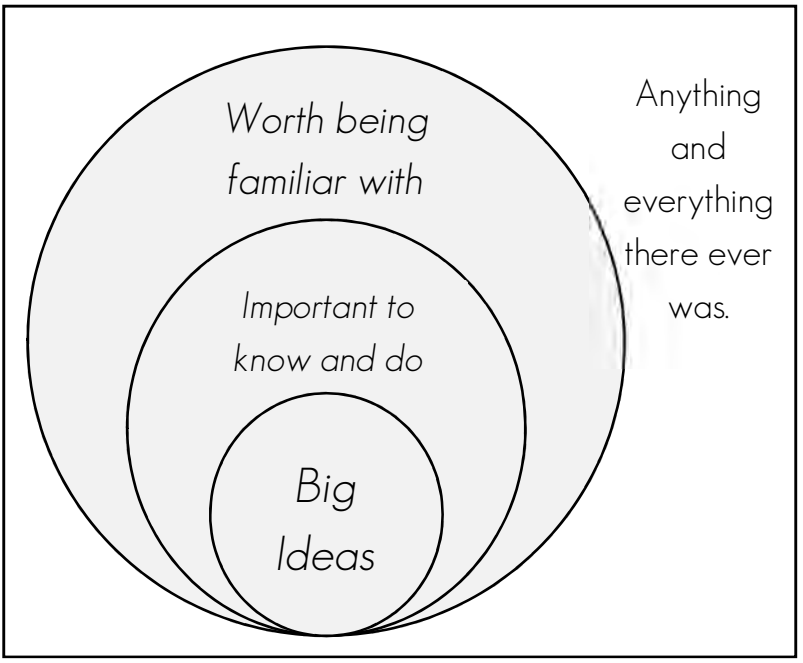

Figure 1. Adapted from Wiggins and McTighe (2005).

Finally, this brings us to the center-most circle, within which are the words, "big ideas and core tasks." These ideas will "anchor" the program and represent the "heart" of the topic (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 72). This visual organizer can be a helpful tool for prioritizing content.

Once you know what ideas and skills you want your instruction to focus on, it's time to translate those into clear learning goal statements. These statements typically start with a phrase like, "As a result of this program, learners will be able to…." The word that follows this phrase should be an action verb that clearly describes what you want learners to be able to do with the knowledge or skills they gain through your instruction. Vague verbs like "understand," "know," or "learn" should be avoided. Action

verbs should be appropriate for the scope and purpose of the instruction. For example, a verb like "list" might be appropriate for a program aimed at teaching learners insect facts, while a verb like "evaluate" might be a good choice for a program that asks participants to critically examine local food insecurity. There are many action verb charts online to help instructors write clear, manageable, and measurable learning goals; for example, take a look at this one from Fresno State University, which organizes learning goal verbs according to Bloom's Taxonomy levels: https://bit.ly/1dLvANi. The table below contains some examples of poorly-written learning goals alongside improved versions of each.

Table 1. Learning Goal Examples

Poorly-Written Goal	Improved Goal
As a result of this program, the learner will be able to…	
understand how to use the library's online catalog.	use the library's online catalog to find fiction books of personal interest.
write fanfiction.	define fan fiction, choose a mentor text of personal interest and develop an outline for a fan fiction short story.
learn about cyberbullying.	develop a plan to prevent and respond to cyberbullying they experience or observe online.
talk to a local author.	write a question based on a local author's book and pose that question to the author in person.

How Essential are "Essential" Questions?

The answer is: very essential! Essential questions are very helpful in framing content goals and, thus, are developed in close relation with the goals and desired results. True essential questions lie at the heart of a topic and may, in fact, define it. Because of this, essential questions can also be helpful for learners because they assist in connecting different facets of the same unit while also serving as a starting point for learners as they explore totally different topics.

Essential questions cannot be answered in one simple sentence. Their purpose is not to give learners facts or basic knowledge about a topic, or else they would belong in the outermost circle of the diagram from above. Rather, essential questions should not be easy to answer. They should spark a learner's thought and interest. They should provide possibilities and adventure related to the topic. Indeed, Wiggins and McTighe (2005) insisted that good essential questions allow us "to *uncover* the real riches of a topic otherwise obscured by glib pronouncements in texts or routine teacher-talk," and that we must "go beyond questions answerable by unit facts to questions that burst through the boundaries of the topic" (p. 106). Essential questions look past right or wrong answers and seek "meaningful connections with what we bring to the classroom from prior classes and our own life experience … [causing] us to rethink what we thought we understood and transfer an idea from one setting to others" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 107).

Wiggins and McTighe (1998) offered four filters to guide instructors when making decisions about what to teach:

- Filter 1: To what extent does the idea, topic, or process represent a "big idea" having enduring value beyond the classroom?
- Filter 2: To what extent does the idea, topic, or process reside at the heart of the discipline?
- Filter 3: To what extent does the idea, topic, or process require "uncoverage"?
- Filter 4: To what extent does the idea, topic, or process offer potential for engaging students? (p. 4)

Regarding the first filter, Wiggins and McTighe (1998) quoted Jerome Bruner to summarize the idea: "For any subject taught in primary school, we might ask [is it] worth an adult's knowing, and whether having known it as a child makes a person a better adult" (p. 4). Determining the value of something for a child later in life can be useful in deciding what to teach. When considering the second filter, addressing the relevance of something within its discipline can also be useful. If something does not relate back to the heart of the discipline, it may belong in the outermost circle of Figure 1, not as an essential question. When thinking about the third filter, it may seem counterintuitive, but it is important to ask questions with which learners are likely to struggle. By defining an essential question as something learners will likely have difficulty understanding, they will, over the course of the lesson or unit, need to push through those struggles to answer the question. Easy questions may not contribute to learner growth. Lastly, the idea behind the fourth filter is that essential questions should promote learner engagement. By framing questions that address learner interests, it is more likely that learners will be engaged with the topic, and, consequently, their energy will be more sustained. It is

helpful to use the essential questions to excite and motivate learning (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998).

Say it Again...

Setting goals and writing essential questions are parts of the first stage of the backward design process. In setting goals, the instructor is required to narrow down information to ensure those goals reflect big ideas. These big ideas should be focused and central to a topic and should help lead learners to discovery and inquiry into different topics. When writing essential questions, one must consider how a topic reaches outside the bounds of the classroom, how it is anchored in the center of a discipline, how the topic requires exploration into challenging territory, and how it can offer engagement for learners.

Why do these things come first in the planning process of the backward design model? By defining desired results before doing anything else, the rest of the planning process can be guided by central ideas. Not only does this provide a point by which to check yourself throughout the process, but it can also increase the cohesiveness of all parts of a lesson or program. By starting with the end, with the results of a unit, you always know where you are trying to go. Because of this, you can be sure that your assessments and activities line up with the goals and each other.

STEP 2: I HAVE MY DESIRED RESULTS; HOW WILL I KNOW THEY HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED?

The second step of the backward design process is all about assessment. Assessment and its many methods will be

discussed in a Chapter 10 of this book, so this section is concerned with the placement of assessment in the backward design process rather than its practical execution.

After establishing the desired results by setting goals and writing essential questions, it can be very tempting to jump straight to the third step by designing activities and selecting resources, before considering exactly how to evaluate learning. This is an impulse that we should resist, according to Wiggins and McTighe. Without considering and developing the assessment and what would serve as evidence of learning before the actual lesson plans, we increase the likelihood that assessments and activities will become disjointed and that the results of our assessment may not accurately reflect the learning that has occurred. Creating the assessment before the plan ensures the efficacy of both steps. Determining exactly what will be assessed before planning the lesson will ultimately make the third step (planning learning activities) easier because activities can be designed to satisfy desired results and expectations of the assessments (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Just as creating the assessment before the plan will help us produce better results as instructors, so, too, can establishing the desired results be helpful before creating assessments. Clear goals and good essential questions will help frame the assessment and performance goals. Determining *how* to evaluate learners or participants will be much easier after knowing for *what* you are evaluating. For an example of how backward design can help establish the what and how of instructional design, see the spotlight box on the next page.

Spotlight: Backward Design Beyond the Classroom

Joey Feith is a physical education teacher at St. George's School of Montreal in Quebec, Canada. His school held a professional development session in which teachers split up into groups to practice backward design skills. The teachers created plans to help students develop the "knowledge, skills, and understandings [the teachers] hope [the students] will have acquired by the time they graduate" (Feith, 2015). Feith found this exercise to be eye opening, and it sparked a personal development plan.

In his blog, he wrote about the importance of becoming the best physical education teacher possible so his "physical education program will help [each student] effectively develop into a physically literate individual" (Feith, 2015). However, Feith discovered that he had no idea what his specific desired results were in the journey to become the best physical educator possible. So, he created a two-phase plan using backward design. In the first round of backward design plan, he would dream up the ideal physical education teacher (Step 1), create an evaluation rubric based on those goals (Step 2), and perform a personal self-assessment (Step 3). For the second round of backward design, he would set goals for professional development (Step 1), use the

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"Objectives and Key Results" evaluation method he learned through Google (Step 2), and then seek the professional development that would help him reach his goals (Step 3).

While Feith's work did not take place in a library setting, his example does show how public librarians might use backward design to develop an instructional growth plan outside of a traditional classroom context.

STEP 3: I HAVE MY DESIRED RESULTS AND MY ASSESSMENT PLAN; NOW, HOW DO I MAKE IT HAPPEN?

According to the backward design model, it is only after defining the desired results and creating the assessments that the actual lesson planning should occur. When beginning to determine what kinds of activities and resources to use for a lesson, it is important to make those decisions based on the desired results and the performance goals. You can ask yourself, "What should I do instructionally to meet these goals?" Wiggins and McTighe (2005) advise that the planning be catered toward the results of the first two stages, which will result in a lesson that is more about learning and less about teaching. The authors note that "regardless of our teaching strengths, preferred style, or comfortable habits, the logic of backward design requires that we put to the test *any* proposed learning activity … against the particulars of Stages 1 and 2" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 192). In the following several chapters, we will explore instructional approaches and specific methods that you can use to help plan learning activities that reach these goals.

Feith's use of backward design [see spotlight box] is significant because he did not use it to plan a classroom experience for students. The goals of his plan did relate to the classroom because the goals concerned his success as an educator, but it is important to note that his plan had nothing to do with a classroom-taught unit. Backward design can be useful when planning for almost anything. In fact, once you become comfortable with the method, you may find that you can use backward design in very unexpected places. For example, say you have a friend whose birthday is coming up. In determining what gift to get her, you first think, "What would I like for my friend to gain from the gift I purchase?" Perhaps you would like for her to grow in the confidence of her uniqueness (Step 1). So, then you think, "What could I get her that would help her gain that confidence?" You determine that a good book should do the trick (Step 2). Finally, it is time to select the book that will help your friend's confidence grow (Step 3). Indeed, Jessica Shyu, a program director for Teach For America, wrote a blog in 2007, "Life … in Backward Design," in which she described how to find a significant other using backward design. She wrote that you should determine your dating priorities (Step 1), consider how a potential significant other can demonstrate that they meet your priorities (Step 2), and then decide what you could do to meet someone who can successfully demonstrate behavior that meets your priorities (Step 3) (Shyu, 2007).

These lighthearted examples are meant to show two things. The first is that backward design may seem intimidating or challenging at first, but by using it, you will gain confidence and the process will begin to come naturally. The second is that backward design does not merely have significance in the

traditional classroom. It can be a useful framework for planning any number of things, especially library programs.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER FOR PUBLIC LIBRARIES?

It is true that Wiggins and McTighe wrote about backward design in the context of teachers in a traditional classroom. However, backward design is highly applicable and useful in the public library. As instructors, we as youth librarians can adapt this design framework to make it most applicable for our setting, particularly when we consider the rise of the outcomes-based planning and evaluation (OBPE) process.

Step one of backward design, identifying the desired results, is not a new idea for public librarians. With the growing popularity of OBPE, libraries have begun to emphasize the value of setting goals, or outcomes, before determining what your library will do to better serve the community. According to librarian educators Melissa Gross, Cindy Mediavilla, and Virginia Walter (2016), an outcome identifies a "positive change that occurs as a result of using the library," and these changes may occur by "gaining a new or enhanced skill, acquiring a new knowledge, taking on a different or improved attitude, modifying one's behavior, or improving one's life status or condition" (pp. 31–32). In general, outcomes and goals are very similar. It is important to note that outcomes end in a particular result, whereas goals do not. Additionally, goals tend to be broader than outcomes. However, outcomes-based planning and evaluation, like backward design, calls for defining the result before diving into planning.

Step two of backward design, defining assessment and evidence of learning, may seem like the part of backward design that does not belong in libraries. After all, children and teens do not come to the library to earn another grade. However, assessment is not synonymous with grades. Assessment in the library can manifest as any type of evaluation (see chapter 10 for a deeper exploration of what assessment might look like in a public library setting). In addition, as noted by Gross, Mediavilla, and Walter (2016), program evaluation can often occur after it has completely ended. Perhaps someone will remember to collect some evaluating data, but that will not necessarily be the case. This seems odd when considering that evaluative data will confirm the good work being done by the library (Gross, Mediavilla, & Walter, 2016). Because "library programs are the mechanism by which outcomes are achieved, [and] evaluation is the means by which the effectiveness of those programs is measured," the OBPE process asserts that the means of evaluation should be determined while planning programs (Gross, Mediavilla, & Walter, 2016, p. 53). The backward design method goes just one step further to say that evaluation should be determined before planning programs.

We already know that step three of backward design, the planning of the lesson, is being executed, and executed well. Public librarians are designing very creative and exciting programs, and libraries are reaching many people in their communities through those programs. Backward design, and the OBPE process, can only make those programs stronger. By embracing these practices and using them to grow programs and services, we will better serve all youth in our communities.

Sarah Kepple (2013), in an empowering article published in *Young Adult Library Services*, argued for the use of backward design and outcome measures when planning programs for teens. She noted that often, goals can be considered measures of accountability, but she asked, "what if we dare to think of them as targets that empower us to dream and act on that dream?" (p. 34). Kepple acknowledged that sometimes we may not meet our goals with a program, but that should not discourage us because it means we "just spent time, energy, and money on what is essentially research to help us meet our goals better" (2013, p. 36). She argued that while programs that focus on fun are wonderful, these just-for-fun programs have other valuable intended outcomes. By embracing backward design, we can produce these fun programs while focusing on other important goals because "ultimately, our [children and] teens deserve this level of thoughtful, intentional effort" (Kepple, 2013, p. 37).

Instructional Planning Template

Step 1: Desired Results

1. Learning Goals
   As a result of this instruction, learners will be able to…

2. Big Ideas
   What are the major concepts that this instruction will uncover?

3. Essential Question

Step 2: Acceptable Evidence

I will know that my learners have reached the learning goals when…

Step 3: Learning Activities

What learning activities and instructional approaches will I use to help learners reach the goals?

Reflection

What worked well? What can I improve next time?

Sample Instructional Plan

Step 1: Desired Results

1. Learning Goals
   As a result of this instruction, learners will be able to…
   - demonstrate **positivity** by writing a "little pep talk" in the style of Lin-Manuel Miranda's *Gmorning, Gnight* collection (YALSA Teen Learning Outcome, Leadership).
2. Big Ideas
   What are the major concepts that this instruction will uncover?
   - Inspiration and motivation
   - Effective writing within constraints (280-character limit)
3. Essential Question
   How can I inspire others?

Step 2: Acceptable Evidence

I will know that my learners have reached the learning goals when…

- They share their own "little pep talks" with other participants.
- They respond respectfully and positively to others' work.

Step 3: Learning Activities

What learning activities and instructional approaches will I use to help learners reach the goals?

Learners will be grouped at small tables. Multiple copies of the book *Gmorning, Gnight: Little Pep Talks from Me to You* by Lin-Manuel Miranda will be available for browsing at each table. Each group will be asked to find one "little pep talk" in the book that they agree is particularly inspiring. These will then be shared with the large group, and we'll discuss what makes them inspiring, collecting our ideas on the whiteboard. Individuals will then be given time to write their own "little pep talk," keeping to the 280-character Twitter limit. We will discuss guidelines for responding to each other's work, then volunteers will read their work aloud for the large group or at their small tables.

Reflection

What worked well? What can I improve next time?

Some tables could not agree on a single example they all liked, and some learners were disengaged while their table-mates browsed the book. Next time I would try to have copies for everyone or just pre-choose some good examples.

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Chapter 4
How Do Children and Teens Learn? Part One: Traditional Learning Theories

By Haley Young Ferreira

Take a moment to recall something you've learned successfully in the past year. It could be something you learned for your job, preparation for a project or family vacation, a new skill you've developed, or an old one you decided to dust off and improve. Now reflect on this question: *How* did you learn what you learned? Don't read on until you have settled on an answer to this question.

Depending on the nature of what you learned, your own learning preferences, the options available to you for learning, and any number of other factors, your answer to the question above might have gone in many different directions. Perhaps you focused on the person who taught you the new information; maybe you reflected on the physical means by which the brain processes new information; you might have focused on your motivations for learning, or the features on the learning environment that helped you along the way. There is no single right answer to this exercise. The question of how people learn is a complex one, and it has occupied the attention of educational researchers for decades.

Traditional Learning Theories

In education, there are three primary traditional learning theories: behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. Each of these theories provides us with an answer to the question of how people—and, in particular, how children and teens—learn. Behaviorism is focused on observable changes in behavior, which occurs as a result of repetition and practice (Pandey, 2017). Cognitivism gives more significance to the mind and is primarily concerned with changes in cognitive behavior. This theory looks at the thought process behind the actions that students take (Pandey, 2017). Constructivism, the most recently developed theory, examines the construction of knowledge through previous experiences and how students connect these experiences to the knowledge that they acquire (Pandey, 2017). Constructivism acknowledges learning as being a much more personal and social experience than the previous two learning theories. Figure 1, next page, summarizes major differences in these three theories and their applications in the public library setting.

In this chapter, we will examine the origins and functions of each theory, as well as how it applies to instruction in public libraries. It is important for educators, which includes librarians, to not only be aware of traditional learning theories but also to feel comfortable applying them in appropriate situations. This requires an in-depth understanding of what each learning theory states, as well as the benefits and challenges associated with each of them.

While most people have a preference among these three theories, it important to note that none of the theories are completely bad or wrong. As the statistician George Box is commonly credited with saying, "All models are wrong, but some are useful." In other words, all theories of learning have some truth

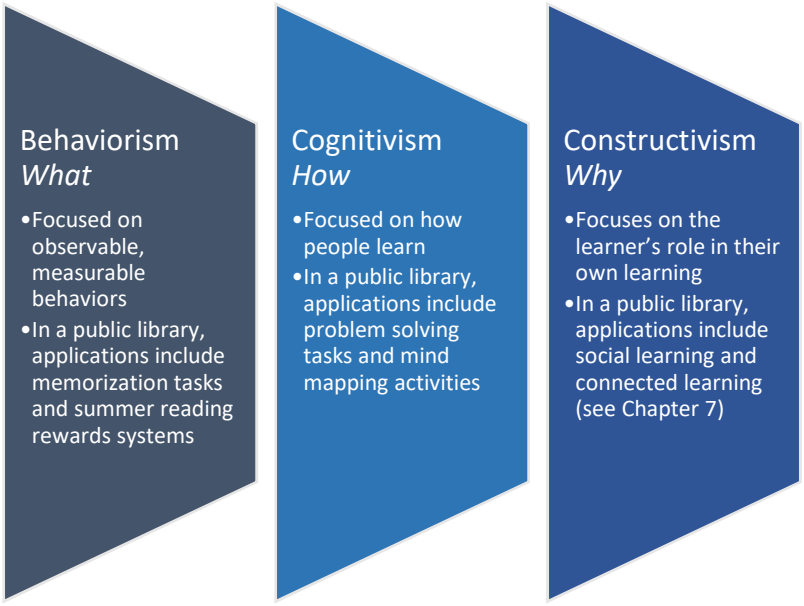
Behaviorism
What
•Focused on observable, measurable behaviors
•In a public library, applications include memorization tasks and summer reading rewards systems
Cognitivism
How
•Focused on how people learn
•In a public library, applications include problem solving tasks and mind mapping activities
Constructivism
Why
•Focuses on the learner's role in their own learning
•In a public library, applications include social learning and connected learning (see Chapter 7)

Figure 1. Comparing Behaviorism, Cognitivism, and Constructivism.

to them, but no one theory can explain the full complexity of learning. Thus, instead of comparing these theories based on their accuracy, we should instead look for how each theory can inform our own practice—how is it useful to me, now, in my library, with my learners? Each theory has a role in instruction and, therefore, has a role in libraries.

For librarians to successfully develop instruction around these theories, they need to understand that desired outcomes, subjects, content, and students will determine the right and wrong time to use a theory. It is also important for librarians to understand that instructing with diverse techniques to address different learning styles increases the chance that most, if not all, of your students will have the opportunity to learn in a way that fits them best. Some students learn better with lessons designed around a

particular learning theory than others. This requires librarians to know and use each learning theory, regardless of their preference.

BEHAVIORISM

Behaviorism is the oldest learning theory that we will discuss in this chapter. In the late 19th century, Ivan Pavlov began noticing that his dogs would salivate whenever he entered the room to feed them because they knew they were going to get food (McLeod, 2013). He noticed that there are some things animals do not have to be taught, and that there are some behaviors that they do have to learn, which they can do through making associations (McLeod, 2013). This discovery of so-called *classical conditioning* is seen as the beginning of behaviorism.

Around the same time that Pavlov was conducting research on dogs, Edward Thorndike observed cats (Booth, 2011, p. 38). He watched cats while they were in boxes to observe their behavior of making "lasting associations between stimuli (pressing a bar) and a desired response (escape!), which resulted in the development of the notion of trial and error" (Booth, 2011, p. 38). The movement truly began in 1913 when John Watson released his article "'Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It,' which set out a number of underlying assumptions regarding methodology and behavioral analysis (McLeod, 2017).

Following Pavlov's and Watson's discoveries, B.F. Skinner continued with the observations of animals by analyzing the learning behaviors of rats and pigeons (Booth, 2011, p. 38). In the 1950s, he developed what would be called *operant conditioning*, as opposed to classical conditioning, which stated that rewards

and punishments are a way of teaching desired behaviors. Eventually, these ideas and practices led to preferences toward "well-controlled, instructor-focused classrooms" in which teachers were the authority and students were there to be filled with information (Booth, 2011, p. 38).

The behaviorist learning theory revolves around the idea that "learning is accomplished when a proper response is demonstrated following the presentation of a specific environmental stimulus" (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 48). For example, when a teacher presents an equation and the learner responds with the correct answer, "the equation is the stimulus and the proper answer is the associated response" (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 48). To put it simply, learning is shown through observable behaviors such as correct answers. In addition to the focus on correct responses, behaviorists put a lot of emphasis on rewards and consequences for these behaviors, with the belief that that will affect the probability of correct responses in the future (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 48).

Behaviorist instruction begins with a pre-assessment for learners so that the teacher can determine where to start with the lesson (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 49). Following the pre-assessment, there are no other attempts "to determine the structure of a student's knowledge nor to assess which mental processes it is necessary for them to use" (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 49). Instead of examining the learning process in that way, the focus is on the behaviors of learners when presented with problems. The duty of the teacher is to "determine which cues can elicit the desired responses" and condition learners to illustrate the correct

behaviors when presented with those cues (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 50).

As one can probably deduce from its name, behaviorism is solely concerned with behavior and is not interested in the thinking or emotions behind that behavior (McLeod, 2017). This approach presumes that affective factors cannot be scientifically measured; therefore, they are not worth studying (McLeod, 2017). This can clearly be a weakness in this type of approach.

Within our field in LIS, we have examined library anxiety, barriers to equitable access, communication in the library between patrons and librarians, and many other areas in which thoughts and emotions are extremely important to services and instruction. In addition to the lack of attention paid to emotions and thoughts, behaviorism does not offer a way to teach children to apply their learning to concepts and contexts beyond the classroom. It supplies them with the right answers, but it doesn't instill in them the skills to be creative thinkers, lifelong learners, or problem solvers. That being said, the approach is not entirely useless.

The behaviorist approach can still be applicable for instruction focused on recalling facts, remembering steps, learning rules, or generalizations (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 49). For example, this approach could be useful in a public library setting in which you are trying to teach learners how to use the Dewey Decimal system to locate their books. In this situation, memorization is key to success. There isn't much of a deeper concept involved that can be used to address other subjects in school or issues in their community when learning how to access books. Repetition, action, and practice can be an effective way for learners to gain familiarity and comfort with the Dewey Decimal system.

The behaviorist approach could be applied in several ways. You could have scavenger hunts for students to be positively rewarded after locating books, or you could use apps such as Kahoot for students to participate in a game in which answering the most correct answers results in winning. This type of gamified learning is a behaviorist approach because it uses rewards to condition students to supply the correct answer when posed with a specific question.

As with all the theories we will mention in this chapter, there are subjects and contexts in which this approach is not only appropriate but also useful. It is the librarian's job to determine what they are trying to teach and what outcomes they want the patrons to walk away with. If it is something as simple as memorizing a technique, procedure, set or rules, or system, then the behaviorist approach could easily be successfully applied.

Spotlight: Gamified Summer Learning

Gamification—the application of game-playing elements like competition, point-scoring, and rewards to other areas of activity—incorporates elements of the behaviorist approach to learning. Some libraries have embraced gamified learning to draw in new users and improve engagement with the library's resources and services. The Ann Arbor (MI) District Library (AADL) used

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gamification elements to transform its summer reading program into a summer learning program for users of all ages.

The program, titled *Play at AADL* (http://play.aadl.org/), allows participants to earn points and badges for a variety of activities including reading, attending programs, reviewing catalog items, and finding game codes in public locations around town. An online leaderboard keeps track of point totals, and points can be spent on a wide variety of prizes in the district's "Summer Game Shop."

The Play at AADL program incentivizes reading, exploration of the wider community and its resources, and participation in an assortment of library events and programs. Learning outcomes from these individual activities will vary. However, the overarching understanding that AADL is trying to instill through this program is that the library provides a valuable public service; in very simple terms, the library is good! The rewards that learners receive through participation in the summer learning events can function like Pavlov's bell, forming lasting positive associations with the library.

COGNITIVISM

Cognitivism sprung from the acknowledgment that there was a gap in the behaviorist theory of learning, in that behaviorism did not consider or observe the thoughts that led to human behaviors (Yilmaz, 2011, p. 205). As the name suggests, cognitivism puts the focus on cognitive processes "such as thinking, problem solving, language, concept formation, and information

processing" (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 57). Cognitivists became more concerned with the how and why in learning as opposed to learner's observable actions. In other words, cognitivists began studying the "mental processes" involved in learning (Yilmaz, p. 205).

Many different people are credited with the creation of cognitivism as a learning theory. People such as "Edward Chase Tolman, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, and German Gestalt were instrumental in engendering the dramatic shift from behaviorism to cognitive theories" (Yilmaz, 2011, p. 205). One of the most notable moments for the foundation of cognitivism was when Edward Tolman conducted an experiment with rats in the 1920s, by studying them finding their way through mazes to examine the idea of a "mental map" in the rats (Yilmaz, 2011, p. 205). Piaget's argument that humans are always "building and revising 'mental models' (schemata)" to organize their knowledge and "categorize experiences" is also one of the major foundational ideas within the cognitivist learning theory (Booth, 2011, p .39).

In cognitivism, "the primary emphasis is placed on how knowledge is acquired, processed, stored, retrieved, and activated by the learner during the different phases of the learning process" (Yilmaz, 2011, p. 205). This view places the learner as an "active participant" in an "active process" (Yilmaz, 2011, p. 205). Cognitivists care more about the knowledge and understanding of learners than their actual behaviors (Yilmaz, 2011).

Cognitivist theorists pay attention to the "motivational and emotional factors" that go into learning (Booth, 2011, p. 39). This requires teachers to become more involved in their students'

learning process and look at how they are coming to the decisions and actions that they are. Therefore, it is necessary for educators to utilize a variety of learning activities such as "demonstrations, illustrative examples, and constructive feedback so that students can have mental models to embody" as opposed to just rewards and punishments (Yilmaz, 2011, p. 208).

All these materials lead to learners storing the information in their memory, which "is given a prominent role in the learning process" in this theory (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 59). It is the educator's responsibility to help learners organize what they are learning and make connections to previous and future learning (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Understanding how to apply knowledge in different contexts is called *transfer*. In our current society, it is likely that most educators feel that teaching for transferability in education is extremely important, but that idea had been missing in education theory before the cognitivist approach.

Instead of viewing learners as empty vessels to be filled, cognitivism stresses the participation of students in their learning development, realizing that they play a much larger role in the entire learning experience; without acknowledging the mental process, we are unable to fully teach students in the way that we should.

Ultimately, the most important shift from behaviorism to cognitivism was the shift from viewing behaviors as proof of learning to viewing one's thought process as proof of learning. One way to think about this in education is how many math teachers today will not accept homework with just the right answers; they want their students to "show their work." This isn't done to frustrate students everywhere; it is done so that the

teachers can see students' thought processes and examine where they may be making mistakes.

Examining how learners process information allows for a richer instructional experience in public libraries. This gives librarians a chance to determine what the students know and how they reach their conclusions so that the librarian can modify the lesson to address the specific thought processes of the students. Acknowledging the learners as active participants requires that librarians get to know them a little bit before the instruction begins. Librarians can open their lessons by asking learners what they know about a certain subject, and they can even follow up on answers given by learners by asking them why they believe those answers to be true.

For example, if a librarian is teaching about search strategies, he or she might ask the learners at the beginning of the lesson if they think it is important to look for sources other than Google. If one learner says yes, the librarian should go further and ask the learner why. This gives the librarian a chance to get a peek at the thought process that led the student to answer that way, as opposed to just taking his or her answer and moving on. If the student just said yes because they guessed, or because they assumed that's what the librarian wanted to hear, additional instruction may be required before moving on to a new topic.

Beyond asking learners to explain their actions or thoughts, educators can also apply cognitivist theories of learning by teaching for *metacognition*. Defined simply, metacognition is thinking about thinking. Practicing metacognition involves monitoring one's own thinking and learning and coming to understand oneself as a thinker and learner. A large body of

research has shown that developing learners' metacognitive skills improves learning across domains (Chick, n.d.). One way that educators can help learners develop these skills is by modeling them. For example, during a story read-aloud, a librarian might stop after reading a challenging word and say, "Hmm. I'm not sure what that word means. I'm going to look for clues in the words and pictures around it to see if I can figure it out. Can anyone help me?" Educators can also encourage metacognition by asking learners to identify questions they have or points of confusion, guiding them through "Before I thought… Now I think…" activities, teaching learners annotation skills, and incorporating reflective activities like journaling into instructional plans (Chick, n.d.).

Spotlight: Metacognition Through Meditation

It's not necessarily easy for children and teens—or adults—to understand or verbalize their own thought processes, which can make cognitivist teaching and learning challenging. One practice that can help people of all ages learn to better monitor their own thinking is meditation, which even very young learners can participate in with guidance.

Meditation expert and author Mallika Chopra presented a session at the 2018 ALA Annual Conference focused on meditation in the library. As she explained, meditation can help young learners "create a quiet space in a

Image (Meditation) created Juraj Sedlák from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

complicated world" (McMullen, 2018, para. 2). Meditation can be taught in its own programs, such as the Mindful Child and Parent workshops led by librarian Jenn Carson. In these workshops, Carson leads parents and their children through "games and rituals to make them more aware of their feelings and their actions" (Carson, 2016, para. 4).

Mindfulness techniques may also be incorporated into existing programming to better integrate cognitivist approaches into library instruction. For example, before you ask learners to share their work, guide them through an anxiety-reducing meditation that Chopra calls "Blow Those Butterflies Away": have them imagine that their stomachs are full of butterflies, take a deep breath in while visualizing the butterflies, then exhale deeply to blow the butterflies out (McMullen, 2018).

CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivism, which is also known as constructionism, is focused on the belief that learning is a "social process informed by prior experience, beliefs, and individual ability" (Booth, 2011, p. 39). Variations of constructivism include radical constructivism, social constructivism, and deconstructivism; while there are these variations, the theory of constructivism operates on the belief that reality is socially constructed, created through language, and understood through narrative (Matthews, 2003). Because learning is approached with this frame of mind, constructivist educators acknowledge that "social interactions and context is necessary for

learning to occur" and that peer and teacher feedback is a meaningful component to learning (Matthews, 2003, p. 57). Both cognitivism and constructivism are far less focused on rewards and punishments than behaviorism and instead try to develop and leverage intrinsic motivations in students (Matthews, 2003).

Lev Vygotsky, who was mentioned in the previous section, developed the idea of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is basically the area within which each student can learn in specific situations. A learner's ZPD can grow or shrink depending on their learning environment and access to more-experienced individuals, which could include teachers or peers (Booth, 2011). The ZPD concept acknowledges that the magnitude and direction of learning is not always the same for all learners, even when those learners are exposed to the same materials and activities.

In addition to ZPD, constructivism focuses on the concept of *situated learning*, which presumes that learning is affected by both cognitive and contextual factors. Constructivist educators believe that, for a learner to be able to effectively grasp and transfer knowledge, an instructor must situate the information "in a way that allows learners to interact with its real-world application" (Booth, 2011, p. 40). This means students can best learn skills and information by interacting with them. For example, instead of telling students how to be successful writers, an instructor could give students prompts they care about, model effective writing, and then let learners write. Using constructivism in this way is similar to the instructional designs used in connected learning (Chapter 7).

Another important addition from constructivism is the realization that learners are independent and unique beings. Constructivists believe that "learning is individualistic and subject

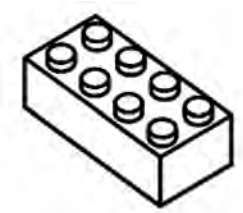
to ability and preference" (Booth, 2011, p. 40). Constructivism states that both the learner and the context are important to learning processes and outcomes, and, as learners, we all construct our own knowledge based on personal perceptions and experiences (Booth, 2011).

Along with cognitivists, constructivists do not view children as empty vessels, but they argue that since students interpret knowledge based on their own reality, learning should be student-directed. This means that educators would alter their lesson plans, teaching styles, and content to meet children where they are in ability, stage, or interest (Matthews, 2003). This requires an instructor to get to know their learners and target their interests at their level of ability, as opposed to having a one-size-fits-all lesson. Public libraries are one of the best places for this type of learning to occur since there is less pressure on designing lessons around specific standards or curriculum and since programming can be based on student's interests. This allows librarians to acknowledge interests among their patrons and give them multiple ways to learn about that topic.

Clearly, cognitivism and constructivism share several beliefs and attitudes towards learners and the learning process. One of the biggest differences, however, is that constructivists believe that learners "create meaning as opposed to acquiring it" (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 55). They believe that each learner interprets and understands the world around them based on their own unique life experiences and that there is not one universal meaning or understanding for all students (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). This major difference between cognitivism and constructivism changes the way an educator designs his or her

lesson. The instructor must plan his or her lesson while understanding that "meaning is created by the learner: learning objectives are not pre-specified nor is instruction predesigned" (Ertmer & Newby, 2013, p. 58).

Spotlight: Building Knowledge with LEGOs



Milwaukee children's librarian Peter Blenski created a LEGO Challenge event that demonstrates constructivism in action (Blenski, n.d). In this program, he challenged participants to build their own desert island out of LEGO blocks. This is part of the learner-centered approach to constructivism, which builds on existing student interests and knowledge to create new understandings. Blenski also recognized that his participants were each unique independent learners, which is why he let them build their own islands however they like.

After learners had built their islands, he gave them a choice to pull out a disaster card, letting them know that "whatever disaster they pull will happen to their island, so they need to find a way to fix it" (Blenski, 2017). Once again, he gave students a choice, and he let them construct their own meaning of the disaster and how to fix it. By leaving the options open, students with varying ability levels could participate in

Image (Lego) created Gerardo Martín Martínez from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

this challenge. A 10-year-old with a lot of practice and passion for engineering might build a large complex island and pull out multiple disaster cards to solve, whereas a seven-year-old with cognitive disabilities might build a much smaller and simpler island and take the challenge at their own pace.

Because each learner designed something based on their own understandings and experiences and took part in something that was relevant to their own interests, they were able to develop critical thinking, engineering, and design skills that they could then transfer into other contexts.

CONCLUSION

As discussed in this chapter, there are three traditional learning theories that librarians should be aware of: behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. Behaviorism revolves around the belief that "learning is observable and conditioned" (Booth, 2011, p. 46). Cognitivism is based on the mindset that "learning is cognitive, structural, and internal" (Booth, 2011, p. 46). Constructionism states that "learning is social, active, and contextual" (Booth, 2011, p. 46). After examining each theory, we can understand that there are many factors that affect learning, including "memory, motivation, environment, and prior learning" (Booth, 2011, p .46). As you can see, each theory somewhat builds on the one before it, adding to our understanding of the complexities involved in the learning process.

While constructivism takes the most into account when examining the learning process, behaviorism and cognitivism are

not "wrong." Each theory has a time and place to be successfully implemented in a library setting. Used appropriate, all three approaches can lead to "a better understanding" of "information literacy and critical thinking" (Johnson, 2007, p. 107). For example, the behaviorist approach can be effective when learners are presented with specific outcomes prior to the lesson (Johnson, 2007, p. 108), such as learning the Dewey Decimal system. The constructivist approach to teaching information literacy could be applied when learning outcomes allow for multiple approaches to the same task, for example having teens create an escape room in the library. All the theories are important to understand; it is up to the librarian to make them useful and effective.

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Chapter 5
How Do Children and Teens Learn? Part Two: Critical Learning Theories

By Mara Rosenberg

A group of fourth-graders gathers on the carpet to listen as their teacher reads aloud from *George* by Alex Gino. The previous week, during the introduction to the novel about a young transgender girl, the reaction from students was varied. Some had background knowledge and opinions on the subject, while others seemed perplexed. Today, as they listen, they hear a character misgender George. The response is no longer disparate. Across the group, people express empathy for George, sadness that she doesn't feel safe to share her secret, and frustration about societal gender norms. What accounts for this change? These students had the opportunity to see beyond their own lives and experiences through the text. Opportunities to respond and reflect in partnerships and small groups led to new ways of thinking and feeling. This is a classroom in which students have learned to question, to examine texts with a critical lens.

BACKGROUND

Critical pedagogy is an approach to education rooted in critical theory, a "philosophical approach to culture, and

especially to literature, that considers the social, historical, and ideological forces and structures which produce and constrain it" (Critical theory, n.d.). Developed by the Frankfurt School in the 1930s, critical theory is "concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion, and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system" (Kincheloe, p. 49).

Critical pedagogy traces its roots to Paulo Freire, who applied critical theory to education. Freire's work focused on improving the lives of poor people in Brazil. He believed that education and literacy were key to disrupt the economics-based power structure. He asserted that the traditional system of education perpetuated disempowerment. In his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire delineated the outcomes of the Brazilian education system:

> [T]he teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. … They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. (p. 72)

Freire advocated for a *dialogical pedagogy* in which students construct knowledge through "conversation and sharing about a particular content object, whether that be a text, an idea, or a situation" (Beatty, 2015, p. 13).

In addition to Friere, modern critical pedagogy frameworks borrow heavily from *critical race theory* (CRT). In the

early 1980s, scholars in the United States began to apply CRT to their study of the American legal system. This theory grew out of an acknowledgement of the role of race and power in the American legal realm. These scholars believed that the U.S. legal system maintains white supremacy through the applications of laws that disproportionately impact people of color. They began to examine ways to dismantle existing structures that perpetuate inequality in the power dynamic based on race.

Before we go further, let's briefly examine the idea of race (a full explanation of this very complex topic would take its own book; if this information is new to you, consider checking out the online professional development curriculum Project READY, www.ready.web.unc.edu). Race is not biological. There are not genetic differences between racial groups. The exterior, phenotypical differences we see are the result of adaptations to environmental conditions over centuries. Race, rather, is a social construct created to excuse the subjugation, exploitation, and genocide of whole groups of people. If we look at the economic roots of the United States, racializing Africans and Native peoples allowed Europeans to take land and enslave human beings (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

Critical race theory also influenced academics and activists who were interested in identities other than race. Other marginalized groups began to examine the systemic nature of their oppression. Feminist, LGBTQ, religious-minority, Asian-American, Latinx, and indigenous activists situated their work around dismantling the systems that enabled majority groups to hold on to power and privilege.

As awareness grew that people's multiple identities impact their lives in different ways, academics such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (see sidebar) began to study the intersection of identities within individuals. Intersectionality is a "recognition of the way different identities and forms of oppression, privilege, and/or identity overlap and interact. People are influenced by numerous dimensions of identities that change in different contexts and interact with each other at different times in various ways" (Funk, Kellner, & Share, 2016, p. 29). For example, a white homosexual man has the privilege of race and sex, but his sexual orientation has a history of marginalization and may impact his access to certain protections. "Intersectionality is the idea that identity cannot be fully understood via a single lens such as gender, race, or class alone" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 175).

Intersectionality

Researcher and author Kimberlé Crenshaw has been writing and speaking about intersectionality since the late 1980s. Watch her TED Talk, titled "The Urgency of Intersectionality," at https://bit.ly/2wP0TTr.

Academics in disciplines outside of the legal field began to adopt the underlying foundations of CRT and conducted research using the framework of CRT within their own fields. Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate (1995) argued "for a critical race theoretical perspective in education analogous to that of critical race theory in legal scholarship" (p. 47). They contended that the existing multicultural theoretical models did not acknowledge the inequities perpetuated by the intersection of race and property in American society. This work informed

Ladson-Billings' development of culturally responsive pedagogy (see pp. 93-94 for more about culturally responsive pedagogy).

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN THE LIBRARY

"School librarians can be a primary voice in promoting the importance of social equity for all students" (Summers, 2010, p. 10). There are several ways we can foster equity by bringing critical pedagogy to our work as school and youth librarians. The first step we can take is to recognize that we come to our interactions with youth with specific worldviews, based upon our own lived experiences. The youth we serve have necessarily different lived experiences. We cannot make assumptions about them; we must listen and believe when they share their perspectives and experiences. It is vital that we have difficult conversations with colleagues and the learners with whom we work. The impacts of race in America will not go away through benevolent colorblindness, and neither will the impacts of other forms of marginalization go away simply because we choose to ignore them.

Lived experiences, both our learners' and our own, are heavily influenced by the cultures of home and of community. Teacher educator Randy Bomer (2017) offered a definition of culture as it relates to our work with youth. He views culture as "a group of people's way of life, all of their patterns of communication, systems of valuing, habits of being, and understandings of expression—a group's ways of signaling membership and belonging through both minute and large-scale interactions" (p. 11). This delineation requires us to think about culture beyond holidays, food, clothing, and language. "Way of

life" and "habits of being" push us to think of culture as including all the socializing influences that impact how learners experience and come to understand the world, including their time in our libraries.

Knowing individual learners and their stories is important, but it is not enough. If you work in a community with a large Hmong population, for example, learn about the Hmong culture, traditions, beliefs, and refugee experience. Educating yourself will put you in a position to check for stereotypes and biases in your collection, as well as informing your work with your learners and their families.

In our role as educators, we have the opportunity, in developmentally appropriate ways, to share the foundations of critical theory. Teaching Tolerance (https://www.tolerance.org/), a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, has a wealth of lesson plans, media, book lists, and teaching tips that can be used in the library setting. The resources are available for preschool through college-age, as well as for professional development of educators and others working with youth. Of particular note are the organization's social justice standards (https://bit.ly/2w15sen), which provide "a road map for anti-bias education" (Teaching Tolerance, 2016, p. 2). The standards are organized by grade ranges and can help librarians develop age-appropriate equity-based learning goals for their learners.

At the heart of critical pedagogies is the habit of taking a questioning stance and engaging in the dialogic Friere promoted. One way that librarians can accomplish this is through posing critical questions about text to our learners. Over time, learners can internalize these questions to become critical consumers of the material they read. Texts in this context are not limited to traditional

printed materials. Photographs, songs, and videos all convey meaning and may be critically examined. The following list of questions from Teaching Tolerance (2017) provides a good starting point for educators guiding conversations about text:

- Whose voice is omitted in this text?
- Who has the power?
- What is the author's agenda?
- How is the information used?
- Who decided the "truth"?
- What assumption is being made?

By engaging with these questions, learners can consider points of view not presented within the text. The disposition to question text reduces the acceptance of text at face value. It develops proficiencies in critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving skills as enumerated in the Common Core State Standards (2010), the Youth Engagement and Leadership portions of the YALSA Teen Services Competencies (2017), and the AASL Standards Framework for Learners (2017).

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGIES

Culturally responsive or relevant pedagogy (used interchangeably here) and culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) are related models that recognize and honor the diversity of the youth in our libraries. Both approaches allow us to "incorporate teaching practices that respond to the cultures of the students in front of us" (Davis, 2012, p. 8). These practices stand in response to hegemonic curricula and pedagogies that cause harm to

learners. "Volumes of research have addressed the cognitive, emotional, and psychological damage that can occur when students' lives are not validated during the learning process" (Thornton, 2017, p. 73).

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) introduced culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) in opposition to what she identified as a deficit-based approach to educating marginalized students (see sidebar). Ladson-Billings asked teachers to see their students' home cultures as assets instead of obstacles. She found that in classrooms with teachers who applied CRP, students benefited academically while simultaneously developing cultural and sociopolitical competencies. As her work evolved, she expressed dissatisfaction with the constrained application of CRP in classrooms and a sense that the pedagogy was applied with only a surface understanding of culture. Advocating a "remix," Ladson-Billings (2014) promoted a shift from CRP to CSP.

Deficit- Versus Asset-Based Approaches

Educators who take a *deficit-based approach* focus on learners' shortcomings. These educators blame learners, their families, and their cultures for perceived failures, and may see their role as "fixing" or "saving" learners. Educators who assume an *asset-based approach* focus on learners' strengths and view so-called achievement gaps as resulting primarily from inequitable systems rather than individual choices. These educators see their role as helping all learners develop their abilities and reach their potential.

Django Paris (2012) proposed CSP, a framework that "seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 93). He asserted that schools should offer "access to dominant cultural competence" (p. 95) in addition to sustaining, rather than merely acknowledging or even celebrating, the cultures of students' homes and communities. Unlike traditional education in America—with its goal of acculturation of all students to the white, Christian, English-speaking dominant culture—CSP seeks to give all students the skills and competencies to fully participate in an increasingly multi-cultural, multi-racial American society. CSP focuses on "sustaining and extending the richness of our pluralistic society. Such richness include[s] all of the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being that our students and communities embody—both those marginalized and dominant" (Paris, 2012, p. 96).

CSP In Practice

What does CSP actually look like on the ground? Listen to Dr. Django Paris's answer to that question in this ten-minute podcast episode titled "The Look and Feel of Culturally Responsive Instruction," produced by teacher and blogger Larry Ferlazzo: https://bit.ly/2sq7DoH

The spotlight box on the next page highlights one example of a public library program in Grand Rapids, Michigan that fulfills many aspects of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy. As you read about this program, think about how it goes beyond acknowledging or celebrating children's home cultures to actively sustaining those cultures.

Spotlight: Talking about Race in Storytime

Grand Rapids Public Library in Grand Rapids, Michigan is actively engaged in having conversations about race… in storytime. Youth Services Manager, Jessica Anne Bratt, has created a variety of resources to help library staff and caregivers talk with children about race during literacy activities.

Bratt's outlines for story times include not just a list of songs, fingerplays, and books, but also language for staff to use when engaging both children and adults. These plans offer models of language families may use at home when talking about race with their children and let caregivers know about the importance of having these conversations.

In one preschool plan, staff introduce the book *I Got the Rhythm* by Connie Schofield-Morrison with "Look at her hair and skin? Is it the same or different than [yours]? We are all born with different shades of skin colors and hair textures. Doesn't she have awesome afro-puffs?" Staff also share tips with caregivers about sharing their opinions regarding unfairness when reading about racial stereotyping or discrimination. They guide parents to reinforce that "different and weird are not the same thing." Sample materials from Bratt are available from the Jbrary story time blog at https://bit.ly/2Fq0Xu2.

Image (story time) by Iconathon from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

CRITICAL MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACIES

Combining critical pedagogy with cultural literacy studies, critical media literacy (CML) engages students in taking a critical stance with a wide range of media. CML "empowers [teachers and learners] to act as responsible citizens with the skills and social consciousness to challenge injustice" (Funk, Kellner, & Share, 2016, p. 2). As our learners engage with media both inside and outside school, we can create opportunities for them to interrogate the embedded values and points of view contained in the messages they encounter. Lessons and programs that engage learners in CML extend "the critical thinking skills necessary to analyze messages and synthesize information" (Carlson, Share, & Lee, 2013, p. 51).

Mohammed Choudhury and Jeff Share (2012) enumerated the key ideas for critically questioning media messages. The first area is the social construction of messages. What decisions were made by the person or people who created this message? How could different choices affect the message? They recommended examining the language rules of the media. How did the use of elements, such as sounds or visuals, impact the audience? The second concept is that individuals interpret texts differently depending upon their lived experiences and the lenses they bring to the work. By interrogating the biases of the author/producer, learners build an understanding about the illusion of objectivity. The final idea for learners to consider is the purpose for the creation and sharing of the message. Does the author have a particular agenda they are trying to promote? Is the media produced by a company with a profit-making motive? Choudhury and Share emphasized the value of critical literacy for

the health of democracy. Teaching critical literacy skills does not detract from content area learning, but rather Choudhury and Share found that the students involved in their research also made substantial academic gains.

In the introduction to their book *Information Literacy and Social Justice*, Lua Gregory and Shana Higgins (2013) called for critical information literacy as a pedagogical model for librarians. This paradigm moves beyond the goals of locating, using, and analyzing information to consider the "social, political, economic, and corporate systems that have power and influence over information production, dissemination, access, and consumption" (p. 4). Recognizing the evolving nature of the information landscape, the authors advocated for teaching learners about the processes through which information is constructed and disseminated. We don't need to look far to find examples of the intentional distribution of inaccurate or false information through social media outlets. It is vital that we give learners the opportunities to develop skills and critical consciousness about information and information sources.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Foundational to both critical and cultural pedagogical models is the need for educators to be culturally competent. To plan and facilitate lessons and programs within this model, we, as professionals, need to demonstrate skills and dispositions for cross-cultural interactions. What does that look like, and how do we develop those skills? Bonnie Davis, in her book *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You* (2012), outlined several questions that can guide educators to examine their own lenses:

- How were you acculturated?
- What is your ethnic culture or ethnicity?
- What is your racial identity?
- What is your nationality?
- How do your ethnicity, racial identity, and nationality differ from you students and colleagues?
- What factors contribute to the lens you wear as you view the world? (p. 9–12).

She continued to identify myriad factors that influence acculturation, including: "family, gender, racial identity, ethnicity, nationality, age, sexual orientation, language, friends, religion, school, geography, income of family or social class, political views, electronic media, social organizations, ableness, [and] others" (p. 12). Julie Stivers and Sandra Hughes-Hassell (2015) wrote that culturally competent librarians create "equitable environments" and approach "youth and their families from an asset-driven perspective" (para. 5).

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

While collection development is distinct from instruction, it is still related; the resources we collect for our libraries can be used in our instruction (as in story times), and our learners may seek information from library resources to extend learning that began with our instruction. Thus, it is critical that our library collections support equity and inclusion, and that our resources feature positive representations of diverse cultures, races, genders, sexualities, religions, and abilities.

In her landmark essay, "Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors," Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) created a metaphor for the role of literature in the lives of young people. She equates books with glass that allows the reader to see in to other worlds, but when the light hits the glass just right, the glass reflects back. She posits that when we see ourselves reflected in text, we have the opportunity to learn about ourselves and to engage in the identity work that is a hallmark of growing up. Bishop goes on to describe how children of color have fewer opportunities to see themselves in the books they encounter. While there have been efforts in recent years to improve representation, there continues to be an imbalance in the representation of characters from racialized and marginalized communities, as shown in Figure 1, next page (Huyck, Dahlen, & Griffen, 2016). For a printable PDF of this graphic, visit https://bit.ly/2cHH6h7.

We Need Diverse Books (https://diversebooks.org/) and the #OwnVoices campaign have highlighted the need for increased diversity in books for children and youth. This includes diversity in terms of who is depicted in the text as well as diversity among authors. Perhaps future data will show representation in text that more closely approximates representation within the population.

Best practices in culturally responsive collection development include intentional selection and deselection of materials. Denise Agosto (2017) recommended that librarians use five indicators when evaluating multicultural literature: accuracy, expertise, respect, purpose, and quality. As librarians cannot be experts in all cultures, making evaluations using these criteria can be challenging. Fortunately, there are resources

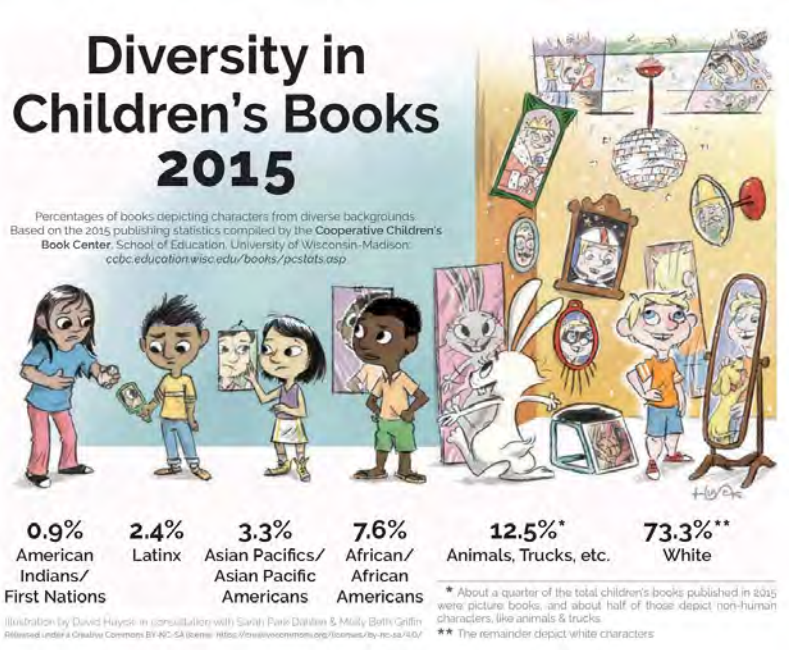
Diversity in Children's Books 2015
Percentages of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds.
Based on the 2015 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison:
ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/pcstats.asp
0.9% American Indians/ First Nations
2.4% Latinx
3.3% Asian Pacifics/ Asian Pacific Americans
7.6% African/ African Americans
12.5%* Animals, Trucks, etc.
73.3%** White
* About a quarter of the total children's books published in 2015 were picture books, and about half of those depict non-human characters, like animals & trucks.
** The remainder depict white characters.

Figure 1. Diversity in Children's Books, 2015. From Huyck, Dahlen, and Griffen, 2016.

available from groups with the expertise to properly assess accuracy, respect, and purpose (see Resources for Further Reading, next page). A word of caution about relying solely upon reviews from publications such as *School Library Journal* and *Hornbook*: Most reviewers for these publications are nondisabled white women who may or may not have the expertise to evaluate the appropriateness of representations of people from marginalized communities. Until there is more diverse representation within these traditional resources, it is advisable to seek additional reviews from sources with appropriate cultural expertise.

CONCLUSION

Our learners live in an increasingly multi-cultural, multi-racial, and multi-linguistic world. Additionally, they are surrounded by media in school and in their leisure time. Critical literacy and cultural competency will equip them to be engaged citizens who can identify social inequities and work toward creating a more just community.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

- Teaching Tolerance: https://www.tolerance.org/
- Chimamanda Adichie's TED Talk: *The Danger of a Single Story*: https://bit.ly/1kMOnud
- Equity in the Library – Selection Criteria: https://unc.live/2wRVAIY
- Where to Find Diverse Books, from We Need Diverse Books: https://bit.ly/2FdG3Pd

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Chapter 6
From Theory to Practice: Instructional Approaches

By Brittany Soder

Planning time. For a classroom teacher, this precious part of the school day (or, too often, the night or weekend) is where the *what* (standards and student learning goals) and the *why* (educational theory) of teaching come together to create the *how*: a plan for the learning activities that will structure the class time and help students reach their learning goals. Any given learning goal can be reached in dozens of different ways; this is the difference between *standards* (benchmarks for what learners should know and be able to do) and *curriculum* (what actually happens in the learning environment). This is as true for learning goals in the public library as it is for learning goals in formal learning environments. A poor teacher is like a carpenter with only a hammer: limited to using the same instructional approach for every learning task (you've probably encountered such a teacher; their default "hammer" is the monotonous lecture). A great teacher, in contrast, has a full toolbox and can thoughtfully select the best tool for the job at hand.

The tools we will talk about in this chapter are *instructional approaches*, ways of orienting your instruction that are based in

the broader context of instructional theory (discussed in chapters 4 and 5). The approaches discussed in this chapter will address the different tenets of these theories. These theories and subsequent approaches look very different from one another when implemented in the library classroom. As Joy McGregor (1999) explained, "A behaviorist would support using extrinsic motivation to reinforce learning activity. … Constructivists would favor active learning that often takes place in a library" (p. 33). Most of the approaches discussed in this chapter are based on the theories of cognitivism and constructivism, looking to actively engage students in their learning, and grounded in the critical theories of learning discussed in Chapter 5.

In this chapter, we will discuss five different instructional approaches: direct instruction, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and experiential learning (for a summary of these approaches, see Table 1 at the end of this chapter). Except for direct instruction, all these instructional approaches have their foundations in the in the work of John Dewey. As early as the late 1800s, Dewey argued that "the essence of education … lies precisely in this idea that there is an intimate and necessary connection between experience and education" (Pohoata & Mocanu, 2015). This belief developed into the idea that active participation from the students is vital to successful learning; it's an idea which is evident in most popular instructional approaches today.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

Think about your own K–12 math instruction. Most likely, much of this instruction revolved around a core routine that

worked something like this: The teacher presented a new topic and showed the class how to solve a particular type of problem; then, the class collaboratively solved a few similar problems, working with the teacher's support; individual students then worked through sets of similar questions on their own; and, finally, students were assessed on their mastery of the topic. This traditional—and still widely used—model of teaching is called *direct instruction*, sometimes referred to as explicit teaching.

This instructional approach was developed in the 1960s by Siegfried Engelmann. Instead of focusing on student inquiry, direct instruction (DI) teaches mastery of knowledge through repetition and summative assessment. Since the establishment of DI, Engelmann and colleagues have continued to promote and advocate for the approach. Today, the National Institute for Direct Instruction (https://www.nifdi.org/) advocates for the use of direct instruction in the 21st-century classroom. There are five key principles of direct instruction (NIFDI, 2017):

- All children can be taught;
- All children can improve academically and in terms of self-image;
- All teachers can succeed if provided with adequate training and materials;
- Low performers and disadvantaged learners can be taught at a faster rate than typically occurs, allowing them to catch up with their higher-performing peers; and
- All details of instruction must be controlled to minimize the chance of students' misinterpreting information being taught and to maximize the reinforcing effect of instruction.

Sometimes, the direct instruction approach is simplified as "I Do, We Do, You Do." In this way of using DI, a new skill is taught first by the teacher demonstrating skill and explaining it as she goes. Then the teacher leads the students in a collaborative effort through the steps of the skill. Finally, the students independently practice the skill until they reach mastery. For example, if you were to teach someone how to reshelve books using the Dewey Decimal System, you might begin by demonstrating the task with five sample books before working with the learners to shelve five more sample books. Lastly, you could have the learners practice the task on their own.

I Do, We Do, You Do

See a summary of the "I Do, We Do, You Do" model in this helpful graphic created by Ellen Levy: https://bit.ly/2l2q7Ez

The focus of direct instruction is to create a learning environment where variance is minimized, which often requires learners to be grouped by skill level. Grouping students by skill level isn't a new phenomenon; however, the establishment of standardized curriculum and lessons is a special focus of direct instruction. Another large component of direct instruction is effective teaching, as measured by acceleration of student mastery. Engelmann talks of "acceleration" and the speed at which direct instruction methods teach students different groups of skills (Adams & Engelmann, 1997). In a study conducted by the U.S. Office of Education that compared 21 different learning approaches, students taught using direct instruction outperformed students in other programs in reading, mathematics, spelling, and language (Adams & Engelmann, 1996, p. 4).

Engelmann has asserted that for maximum impact, teachers using DI should work from a shared script written by experts. This highly prescribed system dissuades teachers from incorporating creative activities in the classroom and encourages them to utilize only direct instruction program material. Engelmann has also argued that when using direct instruction, teachers shouldn't use any other instructional approach or program (NIFDI, 2017).

DIRECT INSTRUCTION IN LIBRARIES

In a study on effective instruction about plagiarism, Richard Moniz, Joyce Fine, and Leonard Bliss (2008) compared direct instruction and student-centered teaching. For the direct instruction lesson, the librarian lectured to the whole class about plagiarism terms and concepts before discussing specific examples of plagiarism. The student-centered lesson involved more active learning activities, such as role-playing and small-group discussions. The authors found that there was no achievement difference between the two groups. These results might vary, however, based on the content and focus of the lessons (for example, fact-based versus skill-based instruction).

The researchers also considered the amount of time that librarian instructors have with their learners. The lessons in this particular study were one-shots instead of recurring lessons. When more time is available to develop relationships with students, understand their strengths and needs, and work on the same skills over multiple sessions, a more student-centered approach may be easier to implement and more effective than direct instruction.

The DI approach works best for teaching discrete facts or skills in a short period of time. For example, you might consider

using this approach when teaching learners how to use the library's online catalog. To help learners gain understanding and skills that cannot be easily summarized into a single right answer, however, other approaches are needed. The DI approach is also limited in its ability to account for diverse learning styles, cultures, and ability levels, making it a less-than-ideal choice for librarians working toward culturally responsive pedagogy (see Chapter 5).

COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Cooperative learning is a student-centered learning approach that focuses on the development of interdependent small groups. There are five elements listed by David Johnson and Roger Johnson (2009) that define effective cooperative learning:

- *Positive interdependence:* Each learner relies on every other learner in the group.
- *Individual accountability:* The group of learners establishes checks to make sure that everyone is doing what they need to do.
- *Face-to-face promotive interaction:* Group members encourage one another.
- *Social and interpersonal skills:* Groups work to develop and practice leadership, communication, conflict-management, and other soft skills.
- *Group processing:* Together, learners discuss what has worked (and not worked) to accomplish their goal or task.

The key to cooperative learning is not just putting learners into random groups and giving them a task but creating activities that help groups "accomplish shared goals … discuss material [to] help

one another understand it, and encourage each other to work hard" (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 68). Cooperative learning, therefore, requires a lot from the teacher in terms of developing and facilitating effective groups.

Cooperative learning looks different depending on the classroom. There are short group assignments for quick, single learning goals that often range from a couple minutes long to a class period. There are also cooperative base groups, which are groups that can meet for several years at a time. These types of groups meet regularly and "give [the] support, help, encouragement, and assistance each member needs to make academic progress … and develop cognitively and socially in healthy ways" (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, p. 69). Learners not only acquire academic knowledge in cooperative learning groups but are also able to practice and develop the healthy social skills they need to be successful people in the world. These soft, social skills are just as important to learners as academic knowledge. It's important to acknowledge that not everything about these groups needs to be perfect. Part of effective learning is being in a space where it is safe to fail. Learning how to work together takes time and patience.

When the model is implemented well, learners benefit greatly from cooperative learning. This approach creates an environment where learners are actively engaged and invested in the learning goals. Robert Slavin (1991) reported that the benefits of cooperative learning include improvements in "self-esteem, intergroup relations, acceptance of academically handicapped students, attitudes toward school, and ability to work cooperatively" (p. 71). When groups are thoughtfully designed,

learners can meaningfully interact with peers from different cultures, races, religions, ability levels, etc., and this exposure to diversity within a context where all group members are working together toward a common goal can help children and teens appreciate the value of inclusion in other contexts.

There are, however, risks associated with cooperative learning as well. Robyn Gilles and Michael Boyle (2010) interviewed 11 middle school teachers about how they developed and implemented cooperative learning in the classroom. A major concern reported in the study was how to manage off-topic groups and students who aren't engaged in the work. Most of the teachers talked about having to prepare or teach their students how to work in groups together. Teachers observed that students were more on-task and more likely to help their groupmates after explicit discussions on proper cooperative group behaviors (Gilles & Boyle, 2010). While all the teachers had positive things to say about the implementation, they also acknowledged difficulties and challenges to cooperative learning. Group composition in the classroom is a large consideration in setting up a cooperative learning environment, and it can take a lot of work on the teacher's part to establish well-rounded groups that work well together.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN LIBRARIES

Forming effective cooperative learning groups requires some knowledge of your learners as individuals, which can be difficult to attain in a public library setting. For that reason, this approach would work best for recurring programs, like Teen Advisory Boards, as opposed to one-shot programs where the

librarian may not know anything about the participants in advance. It's also important to note that small group work within the context of an instructional program may have value regardless of whether it meets all the criteria for true cooperative learning.

Co-Learning in Chattanooga

For one example of cooperative learning in a public library setting, check out this article about Chattanooga (TN) Public Library's co-learning classes: https://bit.ly/2NYBNrx

INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING

Another learner-centered approach to learning is *inquiry-based learning*, which advocates active investigation in the classroom. The central focus to this learning approach is learner questions. More so than in the previous two approaches, the teacher steps aside as the expert and becomes a facilitator of learning. In their instruction theory tutorial, Joe Exline and Arthur Costa (n.d.) traced the beginnings of inquiry-based learning from John Dewey and his suggested reforms to the existing educational system.

Typically, teachers use inquiry-based learning most frequently in math and science because experiments naturally fit the question-centered nature of this learning approach. However, through role-playing, crafting and making programs, case-studies, and simulations, the library is also a natural location for this approach (McGregor, 1999). Research has shown that learner benefits from inquiry-based learning include development of problem-solving skills and creative thinking abilities (Exline & Costa, n.d.), as well as the development of shared experiences with

co-learners, the creation of an engaging learning environment, and the development of positive attitudes toward learning (Klentscky et al., 2002).

Despite being learner-focused, the work of the instructor is essential to the success of inquiry-based learning. According to Patrick Blessinger and John Carfora (2014), there is no one-size-fits-all guide for teachers when implementing inquiry-based learning. Every instance of inquiry-based learning is going to be different and require a different amount of assistance and guidance from the instructor.

INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING IN LIBRARIES

A common objection to inquiry-based learning in K–12 schools is that allowing learning to be directed by student questions is often impossible when the teacher must cover a set of standards in a short time frame. Because public libraries do not have a required curriculum in the same sense, and because the library has resources on nearly every topic close at hand, librarians have more freedom to implement inquiry-based learning in its purest form. Libraries could solicit questions from children and teens (for example, by using a suggestion box in the children's space or posting a prompt on the library's social media page). Then, librarians could design programming around those questions. Alternatively, programs could be open-ended (like Wonder Time, profiled below) to allow learners to investigate questions of their choosing related to a given set of resources. As you read about Wonder Time, ask yourself: What skills, knowledge, and/or dispositions could learners develop by participating in this program or one like it?

Spotlight: Wonder Time in Paducah

On Tuesday afternoons at the McCracken County Public Library in Paducah, Kentucky, children ages 6 to 14 gather to explore, investigate, and practice self-expression as part of a library program called Wonder Time (Bartley, 2018). The library plans the programs around a central theme; past themes have included sound, yoga, healthy eating, and rocks and minerals. During the program, children can explore various resources, activities, crafts, and displays related to the central topic.

Image (Question) by Aneeque Ahmed from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

Closely related to inquiry-based learning is the approach of *problem-based learning* (PBL). This approach comes out of the medical field in the late 1960s. Problem-based learning was a response to medical students who faced difficulties adjusting to real-world practice after the more sheltered environment of the classroom. In this method, learners are introduced to realistic and practical case studies where they can obtain authentic problem-solving experience (Allen, Donham, & Bernhardt, 2011). The biggest difference between problem-based learning and inquiry-based learning is the focus on realistic problems as the heart of PBL lessons.

Problem-based learning shares many aspects with cooperative and inquiry-based learning. Just like in inquiry-based learning, the instructor's role in the classroom is to facilitate discussion and assist learners with problem solving. An additional, and critical, role for the instructor in the PBL approach is to develop in-depth, real-life questions that prompt thoughtful work from learners. As in cooperative learning, learners typically work in small groups throughout PBL; this way, they don't have to rely only on the instructor as the main authority in the classroom and can also learn from and teach their peers. The aspects of student engagement at play here include "active, collaborative, student-centered, and self-directed learning" (Allen, Donham, & Bernhardt, 2011, p. 26).

The stages of problem-based learning are iterative and circular. In the article "What is PBL?" Jeffery Mok (2009) described in depth the different steps of that make up this approach:

- *Set up the group dynamics*: Complete introductions and agree to ground rules.
- *Problem identification*: The instructor encourages learners to summarize the problem in their own words.
- *Idea generation*: Learners begin to brainstorm answers and ask questions about their gaps in knowledge.
- *Learning about the issues*: Learners are prompted to reflect about what they need to learn and where they will go to learn.
- *Self-directed learning:* Learners research and work to process the information that they have found.

- *Synthesis and application:* Learners review their information, thinking about credibility and validity.
- *Reflection and feedback*: During this last stage, learners reflect on the overall process and give feedback on the success of the group, as well as their own process in solving the problem.

All steps except the first and last are iterative and can happen continuously and in any order before a problem is solved. For example, if a learner is researching a question they developed, and they stumble upon something new they want to research, they can go back to the problem identification stage.

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING IN LIBRARIES

Problem-based learning is an approach that works well with the information literacy curriculum. Some librarians are already incorporating this approach in the library classroom and have noticed more student-student and student-instructor/librarian interaction with PBL compared to typical library lessons (Cheney, 2004). Debora Cheney (2004) argued that as they implement PBL, librarians should collaborate with other educators to develop effective and successful instruction. Don't be afraid to reach out to other teachers and partners to work on an interactive lesson. Teams help develop effective and successful lessons.

Because of its focus on real-world problems, PBL may be an especially valuable approach to use for equity-focused instruction. Using this approach with children and teens can help them understand and respond to injustice in their own communities, which builds not only their information literacy skills but also their

empathy, self-confidence, and sense of responsibility toward others in their community.

Spotlight: Hartford's Teen-Led "Unconference"

Librarians Gabbie Barnes and Tricia George noticed that the teens who visited the Hartford Public Library's YOUmedia makerspace were angry. As Barnes explained, "it felt like every day there was some new, horrible thing that they needed to unpack when they came to the library" (Hughes-Hassell, 2018, n.p).

Those "horrible things" included serious societal problems like verbal violence and racism as well as more localized issues like school uniforms and the quality of college prep programs in Hartford schools. To help teens process their anger in a productive way, Barnes and George helped them plan what the teens called an "Unconference." The teens who led the planning process for this event (all of whom are youth of color) conceived it as their "opportunity to come together about injustices happening in our community, in our schools, and in our lives. We will co-create a space for everyone to brainstorm solutions and speak up against everything that's pissing us off" (Youth Affinity Action Squad, 2017, n.p.).

Image (teamwork) created by Maxim Kulikov from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

The event centered on a 90-minute session in which small groups of participants were invited to brainstorm creative solutions to ten problems identified as priority areas by the teen organizers, who named themselves the Youth Affinity Action Squad, or YAAS!. The brainstorming sessions were followed by *Shark Tank* style presentations. The program also featured youth-created poetry and songs, a community art project, and a button-making activity. The Unconference highlights the usefulness of the problem-based learning approach for youth-led, activism-oriented instruction in public libraries.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

True to its name, *experiential learning* focuses on the use of experience in the learning process. In his study of experiential learning, David Klob developed the learning cycle framework, which is composed of four components: concrete experience (actually having an experience), reflective observation (reviewing the experience), abstract conceptualization (making conclusions about or learning from the experience), and active experimentation (trying new things based on your learning) (Klob, 2015). Through this recursive cycle, "learning arises from the resolution of creative tension among these four learning modes." (p. 51). Like problem-based learning, experiential learning also emphasizes the importance of reflection throughout the learning process, pointing to the importance of critical thought for learning.

Klob, like other researchers, credited the theoretical underpinnings of experiential learning to the work of John Dewey. Dewey's writings on active learning and student participation

connect much of experiential learning to the classroom. Common educational methods like internships, field experiences, and simulations can all be classified as forms of experiential learning. This approach is especially common in higher education, with many colleges and universities sending students out to real workplaces to gain firsthand experience with the theoretical material discussed in the classroom. Instructors who rely on the experiential learning approach believe that learning does not happen in a vacuum but instead is the culmination of personal development, education, and experience (Klob, 2015).

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN LIBRARIES

While there isn't a lot of writing on experiential learning and libraries, you can probably think of many ways that experience is embedded into different programs and lessons. For example, Teen Advisory Boards often give participants hands-on experience with library governance, and makerspaces give children and teens the opportunity to design and create physical objects through an exploratory process. As with problem-based learning, experiential learning can also be particularly valuable for equity-based instruction. Translating abstract topics such as racism or homophobia into concrete experiences, such as designing a town hall where community members can discuss these issues, is a powerful way to help young people create enduring understanding of these complex topics.

CONCLUSION

The classroom is changing, and learning approaches give teachers and librarians the theory and vocabulary to innovate and

take chances. It's important to understand that the public-librarian-as-instructor is a recent phenomenon. A lot of research on the instructional approaches presented in this chapter is embedded in traditional conversations around instruction in formal learning environments. As librarians develop a stronger instructional role, we will also need to develop and research these topics, explicitly linking them to library instruction.

On the next two pages, you will find a table that compares the five instructional approaches we have discussed here. We recommend using this table to assess your library's current instructional offerings and to help you plan future offerings. Each approach has benefits and drawbacks, so a strong instructional program will rely on multiple approaches across the range of its learning activities.

Table 1. Comparison of Major Instructional Approaches

Instructional Approach	Description	Benefits	Drawbacks
Direct Instruction	Instructor presents standardized material, which learners then practice until mastery is reached.	Does not require advanced knowledge of your learners; easily accomplished in short time periods; shown to be effective for learning discrete facts and skills	Does not account for diverse learners; very little flexibility; does not take learner interests into account; not great for complex or open-ended topics
Cooperative Learning	Interdependent small groups work together to reach a shared goal.	Individuals learn from and with each other; diverse learners can each contribute something different yet critical to the group; social skills are learned in addition to academic skills and content knowledge	Requires knowledge of learners as individuals to create effective groups; time-consuming; group norms and expectations must be established before work begins for maximum impact
Inquiry-Based Learning	Learners engage in active investigation of questions that they have developed.	High levels of engagement because learning is linked to existing interests; individuals can learn from and with each other, the teacher, and through experience; encourages the development of critical thinking skills	Time-consuming; can go in unexpected directions, which is a challenge for planning

Table 1, Cont'd.

Instructional Approach	Description	Benefits	Drawbacks
Problem-Based Learning	Learners collaboratively explore and develop solutions to real-world problems.	Problems are authentic and relevant for learners; diverse learners can each contribute something different yet critical to the group; social skills are learned in addition to academic skills and content knowledge; great for exploring social justice issues	Time-consuming; instructor must carefully develop (or help learners develop) appropriate problems that are addressable in some way; can be unpredictable
Experiential Learning	Learners make meaning from their own personal experience and from reflecting on that experience.	Encourages critical thinking; helps translate abstract concepts into concrete terms; helps prepare learners for decision making and problem solving later in life	Sometimes requires resources and partnerships beyond or outside of the library; can be time-consuming; difficult to control what learners gain from the experience

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Chapter 7
Connected Learning in the Library

By Alexa Dunbar Stewart & Casey H. Rawson

As public library workers, we understand that the library is not simply a repository for resources. Instead, as the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) asserts in its Public Library Manifesto, the public library is "a living force for education, culture and information" that "stimulat[es] the imagination and creativity of children and young people" (IFLA, 1994). This vision of the public library describes our roles as *connectors*, helping to facilitate learning that occurs at the intersections of academics, popular culture, and social justice. We have already discussed some of the foundational ideas and theories we need in our toolboxes to create such learning experiences for children and teens. In this chapter, we will explore a recently developed framework—*connected learning*—that synthesizes these ideas and can provide public librarians with a roadmap for creating powerful, engaging, and equitable instruction for youth.

WHAT IS CONNECTED LEARNING?

According to the Connected Learning Alliance (2018), "connected learning combines personal interests, supportive

relationships, and opportunities. It is learning in an age of abundant access to information and social connection that embraces the diverse backgrounds and interests of all young people" (n.p.). This three-part focus on interests, relationships, and opportunities sets connected learning apart from the standards-driven, one-size-fits-all instruction often delivered in formal learning environments. Public libraries already incorporate some aspects of connected learning due to the way library programming is planned. Because public libraries want to get children and teens in the door, programs often focus on topics of popular interest, such as gaming, crafting and making, and pop culture. However, to fully implement the connected learning approach, an equal consideration of relationships and opportunities is required. The connected learning framework also emphasizes equity: Whose interests are prioritized? Who is offered the chance to build relationships? To whom are opportunities given, and to whom are they denied?

Connected learning is grounded in four key elements: sponsorship of youth interests, shared practices, shared purpose, and connections across settings (see Fig. 1, next page). Again, these elements are not new to libraries, and some public libraries may already be incorporating some of them. Connected learning encourages public libraries to integrate all those elements into a seamless whole to maximize the learning of young people and to build supportive communities within and across library user groups.

WHY CONNECTED LEARNING?

You still may be wondering, "But why connected learning?" or "Is it really that beneficial?" The short answer to the second question is yes. Connected learning focuses on the learner.

When instruction is learner-focused, it can also be more relevant, transferable, engaging, and meaningful. For example, consider the YOUmedia makerspace in the main branch of Chicago's public library system. This site was one of the first spaces to explicitly adopt connected learning as a guiding framework, and youth in this space are encouraged to pursue their own interests using a wide variety of digital media production tools. Librarians, mentors, and youth themselves have reported numerous benefits of YOUmedia participation: Youth feel emotionally and physically safe in the space; they become more involved in their chosen interest areas; their digital media skills improve; they show improvement in communication and writing ability; and they become aware of additional post-secondary opportunities that they may never have been exposed to in other settings (Connected Learning Alliance, 2018).

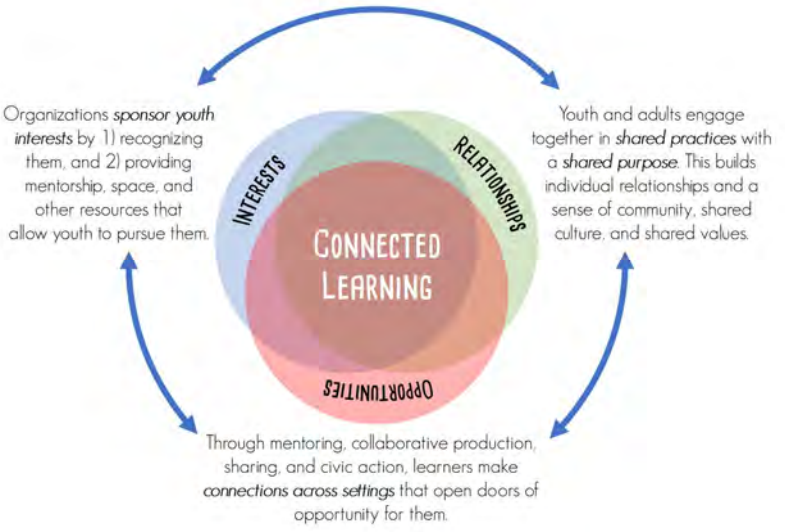
Organizations *sponsor youth interests* by 1) recognizing them, and 2) providing mentorship, space, and other resources that allow youth to pursue them.
Youth and adults engage together in *shared practices* with a *shared purpose*. This builds individual relationships and a sense of community, shared culture, and shared values.
INTERESTS
RELATIONSHIPS
CONNECTED LEARNING
OPPORTUNITIES
Through mentoring, collaborative production, sharing, and civic action, learners make *connections across settings* that open doors of opportunity for them.

Figure 1. The Connected Learning Framework.

Another reason connected learning fits so well with public library instruction is that it calls for and enriches connections to the larger community. Public libraries already have a focus on the community—at least in a general sense—as the community around the library typically defines its service area and user demographics. Many public libraries also collaborate with other community organizations, including schools, businesses. and non-profits. Connected learning both broadens and deepens our consideration of the library community by encouraging learning that:

- Connects individual children and teens to other community members for mentorship, collaborative production, and/or sharing;
- Leverages networked platforms and other digital tools to form communities of shared practice and purpose that transcend geographic boundaries;
- Creates, reflects, and/or reinforces shared cultures and values that respect the dignity of all community members; and
- Improves the quality of life within the community by including civic action components.

Finally, connected learning is beneficial to learners because it is a hands-on, minds-on way of learning. Connected learning has a focus on production and creation (Connected Learning Research Network, 2013). As learners collaborate, create and revise, and share their work, they authentically connect with each other and with the community outside the library. Children and teens learn the skills and content they need

to move forward at the precise time they need it, providing rich context and purpose for learning.

To explore connected learning in detail, including what this approach might look like in the real world, we will discuss of the four key elements of connected learning and share examples of each within a public library context.

SPONSORSHIP OF YOUTH INTERESTS

Youth interests form one of the three foundations of connected learning, along with relationships and opportunities. According to the Connected Learning Research Network (2013), "When a subject is personally interesting and relevant, learners achieve much higher-order learning outcomes" (p. 12). Public libraries have more flexibility to respond to learner interests compared to other learning spaces (such as school libraries) because public library learning is not guided by rigid standards and pacing guides.

People like Constance Steinkuehler, a game-based learning scholar, believe that interest-driven learning is not only valuable but also necessary for meaningful learning. She explained:

> It's kind of stating the obvious, but we forget it in schools all the time that if you care about understanding the topic, you will sit and work through, you will persist in the face of challenge in a way that you won't do if you don't care about the topic. What I'm trying to say is rather than treating kids' interests as a means toward your educational goals, [try] to treat your educational materials as a means towards their goals. (Edutopia, 2013, n.p.)

In other words, the goal is not to hijack youth interests for the ultimate purpose of teaching children and teens information literacy content and skills. Instead, our goal should be to provide just-in-time information literacy instruction for the ultimate purpose of helping children and teens explore and deepen their own interests and passions. Public libraries can do this by first recognizing and validating the interests of the youth they serve, keeping in mind that those interests may change rapidly. Second, libraries can provide the resources, instruction, and space that youth need to pursue their own interests. These may take the form of mentors, texts, digital tools, protected library space, passive programming, physical making materials, and face-to-face programming developed in response to youth demand. See the real-world example below of Heather, who used her interest in Harry Potter to improve her own writing skills.

Spotlight: Sponsoring Youth Interests Through Fanfiction

Heather Lawver was a teenager when she read the *Harry Potter* series for the first time (Jenkins, 2004). Her passion for the books led to her to become a part of the online fan fiction community. Fanfiction is unique in its ability to provide an openly networked audience for writing in a way that allows authors to build off each other to develop "authentic, interactive writing activities" (Black, 2005, p. 126).

Image (Witch Magic) by flamingo from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

Lawver started *The Daily Prophet*, a fan-created newspaper set in the Harry Potter universe (Jenkins, 2004). Lawver wrote for *The Daily Prophet* herself and took submissions for the paper, which was then published to a large fan fiction community. For Lawver and those like her, fanfiction was an opportunity not only to write about something she loved but also to develop a variety of skills, including vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, editing, and revision. Some fanfiction writers have even gone on to publish online and physical books (within and outside of their fan fiction community), leading to the start of a writing career (Jenkins, 2004).

Heather Lawver is just one of many young people who share similar stories; fanfiction communities are made up of thousands or even millions of like-minded people from all over the world. Fanfiction communities embody all three foundations of connected learning: interests (authors write about whatever original media they choose), relationships (communities of authors and fans share feedback and encouragement with each other), and opportunities (individual writers and editors, often called beta readers, have the chance to improve their own skills, which are transferable outside of the fanfiction community).

Writing fanfiction is an interest in itself, which public libraries could support through writing workshops, online fanfiction networks hosted by the library, author visits from high-profile fanfiction writers, and easy access to mentor texts. Public libraries can also encourage children and teens with

interests in existing media to explore writing or reading related fanfiction. Online communities such as Archive of Our Own (AO3) (https://archiveofourown.org/) host fanfiction writing for nearly every fandom imaginable, from the Avengers to Zootopia (though librarians should be cautious when directing children and teens to fanfiction sites, as some stories are intended for mature audiences). The ultimate goal of this work for public librarians is not to teach information literacy skills but to sponsor youth interests *through* the teaching of information literacy skills.

SHARED PRACTICES

While the connected learning framework does encourage unstructured "hanging out and messing around" (Connected Learning Research Network, 2013, p. 66), the core of the framework centers on purposeful and collaborative production. As the Connected Learning Alliance (2018) explains, "Ongoing shared activities are the backbone of connected learning. Through collaborative production, friendly competition, civic action, and joint research, youth and adults make things, have fun, learn, and make a difference together" (n.p.).

Librarians can play a role in establishing these shared practices. Think back to the Dewey and Dragons example shared in Chapter 1 (pages 2-5). Librarian Jamey Rorie established shared practices in that group by finding a volunteer Dungeon Master who provides consistency and structure to the group's meetings; helping to build a culture of friendly competition among participants as they develop in their mastery of the game;

connecting participants to additional texts, such as graphic novels, that enrich their individual and collective experiences of the game; and developing a group norm for welcoming new players to the group.

Connected learning acknowledges that in today's world, some of the richest communities of practice are found online. Social media and other online platforms can encourage peer-supported learning as individuals learn with and from others who share their interests. This access to likeminded peers can help learners feel more comfortable asking questions or receiving critical feedback, both of which are critical to learning. Libraries can provide access to these communities for youth who may not have reliable internet access at home. As Beth Stone (2015) put it, "Digital tools help increase connectivity and access to information … [and] help decrease educational disparity."

SHARED PURPOSE

The third key element of connected learning emphasizes learners coming together for a shared purpose. This shared purpose goes beyond simply working together to accomplish some discrete task. As the Connected Learning Alliance (2018) explained,

> Learners need to feel a sense of belonging and be able to make meaningful contributions to a community in order to experience connected learning. Groups that foster connected learning have shared culture and values, are welcoming to newcomers, and encourage sharing, feedback and learning among all participants. (n.p.)

The shared purpose can be a production-centered goal, an interest-driven learning objective, or a desire for civic change (Connected Learning Research Network, 2013).

Although these learning groups can be made up of same-age peers, they can also be made up of anyone that has a shared purpose with the learner (Connected Learning Research Network, 2013). This means that the people who make up a learning community may be of different ethnicities, races, ages, education levels, gender identities, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic levels, just to name a few. Learning communities that have a diverse population can offer varying levels of expertise and different viewpoints that are valuable for all learners.

Spotlight: Connected Learning on *The Wrestling Boards*

Jonathan, a teenage boy from Europe, and Maria, a teenage girl from the Philippines, share little in common on the surface. Yet these two young people were brought together by a mutual interest in professional wrestling—an interest for which both teens faced stigma in their offline lives (Martin, 2015).

Both Jonathan and Maria found their way to *The Wrestling Boards*, a professional wrestling fan community.

Image (Wrestler) by HeadsOfBirds from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

Maria, who was also interested in fanfiction, began writing for the community's fantasy wrestling federation (a text-based role-playing game), while Jonathan learned Photoshop with the help of others on the site to create and share wrestling-focused images. Jonathan also adopted a mentoring role within the community, sharing, "I give and get feedback often about what I do. …. I often help/mentor new members of the forum to the best of my ability" (Martin, 2015, Peers Helping Peers section).

Within the *Wrestling Boards* community, common interests and ongoing practices—primarily writing, media production, and sharing—helped to create a rich community with shared norms, a supportive and friendly culture, and collaborative learning. For Maria and Jonathan, this community also gave them a sense of belonging and acceptance of an interest that was not encouraged in their offline interactions.

CONNECTIONS ACROSS SETTINGS

As its name implies, connected learning is dependent on relationships and links. Within this framework, "connections" are interpreted broadly to include:

- Those that individual learners make between their existing interests and new learning,
- Those between and among individual learners,
- Those between individual learners and mentors or instructors,

- Those that tie together the larger community that the library serves,
- Digital connections to individuals, groups, and information online, and
- Those across organizations.

Public librarians can facilitate these connections in a variety of ways. Because we have access to a big-picture view of our community that individual children and teens may not, we may be aware of opportunities for connections that we can pass along to learners. We can also collect and highlight resources that help youth make connections for themselves, for example how-to texts about crafting or fanfiction. By staying abreast of popular and emerging online platforms, we can also help direct children and teens to communities where they can find the sense of belonging that Maria and Jonathan experienced on *The Wrestling Boards*.

In all this work, we must ensure that we strive to "connect with youth through the building of trusting relationships developed without judgment of their interests" (Martin, 2015, Connecting to Youth Interest section). For ideas about how to do this, review Chapter 2 (Knowing Your Learners).

CONNECTED LEARNING AND LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

Connected learning can and should have a place in public libraries. As described earlier in this chapter, public libraries are already incorporating connected learning in their instruction and programming. The Nashville Public Library (NPL) has a dedicated teen space with a maker lab, new technologies, and even a creative writing center (Libraries Transform, n.d.). The NPL uses their librarians' knowledge to create instruction around these

technologies, inviting in people from the community and their expertise, as well as encouraging peer relationships and support. The Seattle Public Library has a program called "Your Next Skill" where patrons request that their library hold a program focused on a particular skill (Libraries Transform, n.d.). Their librarians then create a program around this information to help their patrons learn what they want to know, while using technology and other library resources. Both of these libraries are taking steps to incorporate connected learning in their instruction, and they are seeing the benefits of designing programs with connected learning in mind.

Assessing Connected Learning in Public Libraries

The connected learning framework is still fairly new, and because it is so different from traditional classroom instruction, researchers and practitioners are still exploring its outcomes and developing best practices for evaluating the learning that results from this approach. One notable effort in this area is the work of the Capturing Connected Learning in Libraries (CCLL) group, which is a research and practice collaboration between the Los Angeles Public Library, the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), the Connected Learning Research Network, and the YOUmedia Learning Labs Network. This project aims to "serve the needs of libraries by providing them with evaluation instruments, tools, and plans to understand and reflect on their effectiveness in implementing connected learning programs" (Connected Learning Lab, 2018). As of this writing, the CCLL group is still working to develop these tools.

Assessing connected learning in public libraries is necessary, as it is essential and useful to assess any type of instruction, regardless of the setting. However, it can be difficult to measure some of the connected learning principles. To get a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes for a connected learning initiative, qualitative approaches may be best. For example, conducting an informal interview with a teen participant will probably give you much richer information about what and how that teen has learned compared to a survey or an attendance count.

CRITICISMS OF CONNECTED LEARNING

Connected learning, like most instruction techniques, has its critics. In an article titled "What's all the Fuss about Connected Learning?" Henry Jenkins (2013) stated that some people still have reservations about connected learning because they feel as though it takes focus away from academics and traditional literacies. This criticism is less relevant in public libraries than in formal education settings with a required set of topics that must be covered.

Some people also feel that connected learning's emphasis on technology and online networks risks leaving out those who still lack access to reliable internet at home (Jenkins, 2013). While this is a valid concern, it is also an argument for public libraries to lead the way in connected learning implementation, as they can provide free internet access for all community members. It's also true that connected learning does not require new technology or high-tech resources. If you can access your community (locally or online), you can still practice all four elements of connected

learning. This is not an exclusively technology-focused approach; instead, it's a framework for instruction, and it can be practiced with or without access to technology.

CONCLUSION

Connected learning is a valuable framework to practice in public libraries. The four elements working in concert allow the learner to develop 21st century learning skills, something that is necessary for school, work, and civic engagement (Connected Learning Research Network, 2013). Public libraries have a unique ability to provide instruction without a set of school-mandated standards, allowing for their instruction to be versatile and flexible. Public libraries already have many basic elements of connected learning in place; they just need to be brought together to maximize their effectiveness for the learner.

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Chapter 8
Differentiation and Universal Design for Learners

By Rachel Morris

> *In differentiated classrooms, teachers begin with two critical "givens": there are content requirements—often in the form of "standards"—that will serve as destination points for their students, and there are students who will inevitably vary as learners. Thus, teachers in differentiated classrooms accept and act on the premise that they must be ready to engage students in instruction through different approaches to learning, by appealing to a range of interests, and by using varied rates of instruction along with varied degrees of complexity and differing support systems. In differentiated classrooms, teachers ensure that students compete against themselves as they grow and develop more than they compete against one another, always moving toward—and often beyond—designated content goals.*
>
> — Carol Ann Tomlinson (2014), *Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners*, p. 3

In any public library, there are bound to be users as diverse as the collection itself (perhaps *more* diverse than the collection itself). In the new young adult romance section, a Black teenage girl with an anxiety disorder beginning to question her

sexuality is having trouble finding a novel starring someone just like her. In the non-fiction section, a first-generation Mexican immigrant is looking for college prep books specifically designed for students with English as a second language. A 13-year-old boy on crutches is struggling to navigate the bookshelves without assistance. A 17-year-old student is just looking for a fun fantasy novel where diversity is a natural part of the worldbuilding. How do you design your collection, space, and services to address all these users' needs? One answer is by using the principles of differentiation and universal design.

WHAT ARE DIFFERENTIATION AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN?

Educator Carol Ann Tomlinson's (2014) description of differentiated classrooms can be distilled into a definition of differentiation: It is a flexible approach to instruction featuring an adaptable curriculum meant to maximize the learners' potential. In the classroom, differentiated instruction can be something as simple as subtitles on a film to something as complex as an assignment that allows learners to choose the media form their project takes. So, how do we determine what educational choices are actually helping learners, and what is just lip service to the idea of differentiation? To transform this abstract, theoretical concept into an actionable curriculum, universal design enters the scene.

In 1984, a group of education researchers founded the Center for Applied Special Technology, now known as CAST. Its mission was to discover ways to use technology to make education more accessible to disabled students. Through their research, they came to the realization that "the burden of adaptation should be

first placed on curricula, not the learner" (CAST, 2011). To address this deficiency within the education system, CAST developed an entirely new paradigm for education: universal design for learning (henceforth referred to as UDL). To this day, CAST promotes UDL and continues to research and develop innovative ways to address difference in education (http://www.cast.org/).

In essence, differentiation is a way of thinking, a manner of tailoring teaching methods to the diversity of any given group of learners. Universal design is an implementation of these differentiation principles. These concepts encompass a holistic approach to education with an emphasis on one core tenet: growth for all learners. This is achieved through giving them the tools they need to be constant learners.

There are several attributes intrinsic to a differentiated learning environment. A differentiated setting is:

- *Adaptive.* Most educators are aware of adaptive technologies for disabled learners, but the concept of adaptations extends into every aspect of the education environment. Large print text, audio recordings, visual interpretations, and a slew of other adaptations address the multiplicities of learning preferences in the classroom and often enhance the learning experience for every child and teen.

- *Malleable.* In addition to appropriate adaptive materials, differentiation requires constant fluidity and a malleable attitude toward every aspect of education. This means not only reconsidering your mental approach but also reevaluating your physical space. This means making and

implementing preemptive, deliberate decisions regarding the setup of the educational area (for example, ensuring rows of bookshelves or desks are accessible for wheelchair users).

- *Flexible/variable.* Flexibility and variability are desired attributes of lesson plans and learning activities. Flexibility means allowing for impromptu shifts in a lesson actively taking place, as everyone who has taught knows there are infinite outside factors that can change the course of a lesson. And if the questions or ideas of learners change the lesson, that can be a very good thing educationally for everyone involved—if the teacher has worked flexibility into the plan from the beginning! Conversely, variability applies to the means of evaluation regarding learning. A variable lesson, activity, or assignment is one that allows learners to either choose a presentation method that allows them to complete the task to their fullest potential or that allows for easy modification, if necessary. Sometimes inviting learners to present their own alternatives to an assignment is helpful, as well.

- *Outcomes based.* Outcomes-based education, or OBE, is, in its simplest form, an educational approach that begins with a measurable goal or goals and helps students achieve that goal or goals. For example, if the goal is for a learner to master basic addition skills, it may be easy to evaluate whether they have met that goal: Simply administer a test (a variable approach would let this test be taken in writing, through an oral exam, or another means of evaluation). However, if the goal is for a learner

to develop a social conscience, this may need to be broken down into concrete, achievable goalposts. Means of evaluation, transparent to the student, may need to be implemented as well. Backward design, the process of designing a lesson plan or curriculum around the end goal rather than putting together a plan before considering the overall purpose (as discussed in Chapter 3), aids with outcomes-based education immensely.

- *Oriented on student growth and success.* What is the purpose of education if it is not about learning? Differentiation means careful consideration of the various abilities in the classroom and fostering each learner's growth, as well as instilling the belief that each one of them can succeed and that there is not one path to success.

- *One that believes in learners and pushes them beyond their comfort zone.* Support from their teachers and other role models in their lives is essential to learner growth and success. A positive relationship with the public library staff may result in engagement with programs and on-the-spot academic help. If treated with respect, belief in their skill, and high expectations, learners will set (and meet) personal, high goals.

- *Dynamic and diverse.* If we are to consider the differences among our learners, cultural competency is critical. Differentiation is as multi-faceted, multi-layered, and diverse as the youth who visit our libraries. Addressing, acknowledging, and celebrating the various cultures present is not merely nice; it's essential for learners' self-

worth and development into adults who believe in their own power.

- *Focused on challenging oneself rather than fulfilling curriculum standards.* Competition against others can result in severe stress, potential bullying, and an all-consuming negative atmosphere. Measuring learners' progress against their previous work is more productive on an objective level, as it is a direct comparison to previous methods of assessment and can help determine what feedback and evaluation works best for an individual. It also has a more positive effect on the learner's sense of self-worth.

- *Empathetic.* Differentiation means always considering the emotional, mental, and physical aspects of a learner's wellbeing. This is the heart of a differentiated environment. In many traditional learning environments, all that matters is producing the desired result: memorization of information, or passing a test. With differentiation and universal design, children and teens learn in the best way for them.

WHAT DIFFERENCES EXIST THAT THIS MODEL OF DESIGN ADDRESSES?

The purpose of differentiation and universal design is to address the rich multiplicity of differences that exist among individual learners, as much as realistically possible. However, there are marginalized groups for whom differentiation and universal design are particularly essential.

LGBTQ+ Learners

The current estimate of LGBTQ+ people in the United States is between 4 and 10 percent of the overall population. This means that you will more than likely have at least one LGBTQ+ learner. Consider these statistics from PFLAG New York City (n.d.):

- LGBTQ+ teens are eight times more likely to attempt suicide and five times more likely to be depressed than their peers, and if their family disowns them, they are more likely to use drugs.
- Half of gay boys' parents disapprove of their sexual orientation, and 25 percent of them are kicked out of their homes.
- Anywhere from 25 to 50 percent of homeless teens are LGBTQ+.
- Harassment is also a problem: one in five teens are assaulted because of their sexuality; one in ten because of their gender expression; and two-thirds of LGBTQ+ teens have been sexually harassed.
- Because of this harassment, LGBTQ+ teens have an average GPA half a grade lower than their peers.

Even if your LGBTQ+ learners are still at home, they are more than likely being bullied. And if they are homeless, they need very specific help and support.

Learners of Color and Native Learners

The racial diversity within public schools is increasing annually. Youth of color now make up the majority of students attending U.S. public schools (Krogstad & Fry, 2014). Yet youth of

color and Native youth face substantial inequities within the public school system. For example, according to federal data released in 2018, Black students make up 15 percent of students nationally, but they account for 45 percent of all school days lost due to suspensions (Whitaker, 2018). More federal data show that schools with predominantly Black and/or Hispanic student populations have less-experienced teachers, overcrowded and outdated facilities, fewer computers, and fewer advanced course offerings compared to predominantly-white schools (Norwood, 2016). In the public library, it is critical that we attempt to mitigate some of the racial inequities faced by students of color and Native students in their school experiences. If your school systems do not support the minority students, or in underfunded places where minority students are the majority, the public library is an excellent place to begin differentiated instruction as one support.

Learners Living in Poverty

Socioeconomic status is a slippery and frequently misunderstood concept. According to the American Psychological Association (APA):

> Socioeconomic status (SES) encompasses not just income but also educational attainment, financial security, and subjective perceptions of social status and social class. Socioeconomic status can encompass quality of life attributes as well as the opportunities and privileges afforded to people within society. Poverty, specifically, is not a single factor but rather is characterized by multiple physical and psychosocial stressors. … SES is relevant to all realms of behavioral and social science, including research, practice, education and advocacy. (American Psychological Association, n.d., p. 1)

Accordingly, socioeconomic status has huge implications for service in the public library: "Schools with students from the highest concentrations of poverty have fewer library resources to draw on (fewer staff, libraries are open fewer hours per week, and staff are less well rounded) than those serving middle-income children" (APA, n.d., p. 2). Even if your library is strapped for resources, approaching your limited options with differentiation in mind will maximize the effect your programs and space have on the disadvantaged young learners who need that external support.

Learners with Disabilities

During the 2015-16 school year, 6.7 million or 13 percent of students received special education services (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Among children and teens served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 35 percent had a specific learning disability, 20 percent had a speech or language impairment, 13 percent had a different health impairment, 9 percent were autistic, 6 percent had an intellectual disability, 6 percent experienced developmental delays, 5 percent experienced emotional disturbance, 2 percent experienced multiple disabilities, 1 percent had hearing impairments, and 1 percent had orthopedic impairments. Clearly, a diversity of disability exists, and the public library must be equipped to serve disabled patrons. Much of universal design is specifically targeted to assist disabled populations. Developmental differentiation also benefits gifted students who are bored by the undifferentiated curriculum. Unfortunately, the Goldilocks analogy often applies to learning experiences designed for youth and children: Things are either too hard or too soft, and never just right.

HOW DO I ACKNOWLEDGE AND ADDRESS THESE DIFFERENCES?

The official Universal Design for Learning Guidelines posits three principles that form the framework of UDL (CAST, 2011):

- *Representation* (the "what"): Everybody absorbs information differently. People with sensory issues may not be able to handle some audiovisual materials, while that may be the only way for someone who struggles with text to learn. Representation does not just affect disabled individuals; language barriers can necessitate visual representations of information, while cultural differences may affect how learners respond to certain materials. Moreover, some people simply learn better by listening, by reading, by moving their bodies. Diverse methods of representation are essential in differentiating a learning environment.

- *Action/Expression* (the "how"): A common practice is for learners to be required to regurgitate information in the same manner it was received, for example, reciting multiplication tables. This rigid, rote memorization does not allow for different means of expressing one's comprehension. In some cases, variations in physical or cognitive abilities may make it impossible for all students to present their understanding of information in a uniform manner. Personal preference is also a legitimate reason to provide various ways to assess learning. For example, a history project may allow learners to create a video, perform a song, or build a diorama according to their personal choice.

- *Engagement* (the "why"): The subjectivity of every individual means they are affected by and affect their learning experience. How a librarian or teacher attempts to engage a learner can differ dramatically based on that subjectivity. Some learners respond well to open-ended brainteasers that would embarrass and frustrate others. Some learners love close observation and guidance, while others are uncomfortable with strict attention and wish to have time to explore their learning environment on their own terms. Differentiation allows for all these learners to be engaged on multiple levels and in a variety of ways.

Beyond these three core principles, there are several other concrete ways to support these differences in the public library setting. We will explore some of these in the sections below.

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Understanding the concept of multiple intelligences is a great way to begin shifting toward universal design. In the 1970s and 1980s, Harvard Professor Howard Gardner developed the "multiple intelligences" theory to steer the psychological community away from the notion that there is only a single kind of intelligence. Gardner's eight intelligences are spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, linguistic, logical-mathematical, inter-personal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic (the Components of MI, n.d.). It is not a means of pigeonholing learners (the "artistic"

What's Your MI?

Take a quiz to assess your own learning preferences within Gardner's multiple intelligences framework at https://edut.to/2fmDORH.

learners should not always draw, the "scientific" learners should not always do science fair projects), but an opportunity to provide different means of assessment for the same information. For example, a project about Jane Austen's work could allow for a textual analysis, a creative writing reinterpretation, a dramatic film or play, a map of one of the estates, or myriad other options that engage learners on various levels that they themselves choose.

HOW CAN I CREATE A DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY SETTING?

The UDL Project offers a "Daily UDL Checklist" (https://bit.ly/2oNVozJ) that encompasses multiple intelligences, technology, and the UDL Guiding Principles. This checklist is an easy way to get started with universal design in the public library and should help you keep in mind all the many forms that differentiation can take.

Another cognitive tool that can help you differentiate your environment and instruction involves breaking differentiation down into four components: content, process, product and environment. In the article "Everyone Wins: Differentiation in the School Library," Carol Koechlin and Sandi Zwaan (2008) outlined what each of those components may look like in a library setting:

- *Content:* Content refers to the library's collection of materials and resources. Specifically, a librarian may consider developing their collection around the principles of differentiation, applicable for various ages and abilities. This may mean expanding a collection to include resources in non-English languages; ensuring the collection is diverse through multiple lenses including race, sexual orientation,

gender identity, disability, and socioeconomic status; and collecting materials in a variety of formats, such as audiobooks, materials in braille, and other items to make the library experience more accessible.

- *Process:* Process can include collaboration with school librarians and teachers to ensure learners are receiving differentiated support from every avenue available to them. Providing scaffolded support to learning, multiple ways of recording and organizing information, resource-finding challenges, research and information literacy instruction, general support, and assessment tools are all important parts of the learning process made more accessible through differentiation.

- *Product:* Product refers to the expression part of the UDL guidelines. Public libraries are excellent places to compile stellar examples of finished products relevant to various ability levels and types of final product (for example, learner-created films, papers, games, and presentations). Libraries can collect a variety of media tools and instruct learners about usage rights in real time, lending a higher order of thinking to whatever project a learner takes to the public library.

- *Environment:* Environment is particularly critical in the public library, and often serves as the first critical access point for many, especially disabled people or those of low socioeconomic status who find transportation to the library difficult. However, it is not enough to add a bus stop, handicap parking, and a wheelchair-accessible entrance (though these are essential). There must be multiple

welcoming spaces in the library for productivity, resources available for learners at every level, spaces that can move depending on learners' needs (movable furniture and room dividers, for example), technology and tools suited for a variety of projects, spaces with noise restrictions and spaces without for collaborative work and more freedom, evaluative tools, and simple support from the library staff during the entire learning process.

Creativity and adaptability are central features of each of these differentiation aspects. In addition to these methods, the public librarian is in a unique position to offer real-time help to learners. A public librarian with a differentiated mindset is responsive to learning styles and patron's needs, both expressed and unexpressed.

Spotlight: Differentiation at the Brooklyn Public Library

To see a best-practices example of the UDL guidelines and differentiation in the public library, consider John Huth, Young Adult Librarian at the Brooklyn Public Library. On his website, Huth describes himself as a "young adult inclusion librarian who collaborates with community partners to provide high quality information services to underserved young people," and his job

Image by Kirby Wu from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

tasks include community partnerships, outreach, and the design and implementation of inclusive library programs (Huth, n.d.). He emphasizes his role as an inclusive information professional for underserved populaitons and highlights the importance of collaboration.

One of his inclusive library programs has received some media attention: The Universal Makerspace. Inspired by programs such as DIYability (https://www.diyability.org/) that promote accessible makerspaces, Huth began an accessible arcade and expanded that concept into a Universal Makerspace after observing the DIY fixes disabled patrons created to make gaming more accessible. The Universal Makerspace features a variety of low- and high-tech equipment. It is housed in a room with glass windows, so people can look inside, as he does not want disabled learners to be hidden. Everyone is welcome, though priority is given to disabled people. Activities often feature collaboration. One workshop featured stop-motion animation and involved the organization CinemaKidz, which brought in hand puppets for those with limited mobility. A sneaker decorating workshop featured Don D'vil, who runs sneaker workshops and educates youth attendees (Bayliss, 2015).

What else does Huth do? A lot. For his accessible arcade, he hires disabled interns to instill pride and community and sets concrete goals, such as the "Rule of Three," which requires there be three different gaming systems, screens, and controllers available (Banks, n.d.). In a Q&A session for Equal Entry, he described his latest project as one involving low-tech

shadow art at a high school. His words of wisdom: "Accessibility isn't just about building a tool that solves problems although that is important. It's also about making accessibility happen in the moment, as events unfold in real time" (Equal Entry, n.d., para. 3).

The Brooklyn Public Library also features accessibility on its main website on a page dedicated to Inclusive Services (https://www.bklynlibrary.org/inclusive-services). They offer sensory storytimes appropriate for children with sensory issues or autism, a read and play program for nondisabled and disabled children to engage with books and toys, an afterschool crafts program, a garden club, a LEGO club, and class visits tailored to individual learners' needs. By highlighting this information and specifically stating their mission is to foster an inclusive environment, the Brooklyn Public Library provides an excellent practical example of universal design in the field (Brooklyn Public Library, 2018).

THAT SOUNDS GREAT, BUT HOW DO I ASSESS THE SUCCESS OF MY DESIGN?

One primary goal of differentiation is to create *expert learners*, rather than forcing students to master content without a purpose. What is an expert learner? The UDL guidelines again provide a definition in threes. An expert learner is (1) resourceful and knowledgeable, (2) strategic and goal-directed, and (3) purposeful and motivated. Expert learners are self-motivated individuals, able to synthesize prior knowledge with their current learning environment. They are higher-order thinkers who can

organize and outline goals, plans, and purposes for their education. They can challenge themselves and practice responsible studying methods (CAST, 2011). In short, expert learners are equipped to grow and succeed. Assessing for expertise in learning looks quite different from the types of standardized, formal assessments typically used in schools.

We will explore a variety of assessment techniques in Chapter 10 of this book. For now, reflect on what you might look for as evidence that your children and teens have reached the expert learner standard. Regardless of what specific evidence you collect, remember that assessment should always be connected to your learning goals and planned in advance of the instructional experience, as described in Chapter 3 (Backward Design in the Public Library).

CONCLUSION

In the end, the goal of differentiation and universal design is to maximize the benefits of your public library's resources, space, and services for every individual you serve. By keeping these principles in mind and expanding upon them in the way that best suits your unique community, you will begin to make your library more accessible for every learner and ultimately curate a space that is truly for the public.

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Chapter 9
Collaboration: The Power (and the Price) of Working Together

By Ness Clarke Shortley

In an ideal world, public youth services librarians would have all the resources they need to build stellar collections, create outstanding programming, and design highly accessible, fun, and functional spaces for teen patrons. But the realities of working in public libraries mean that collaboration is no longer a luxury or something to do if time allows; instead, it has become a necessity. Budget cuts, staffing reductions, and increasing workloads mean that it is impossible for any one youth services librarian to do everything that needs to get done.

Collaboration can help ensure youth services librarians are successfully serving their teen patrons—though there are certainly pitfalls and drawbacks to working with others that must be navigated for any partnership to work.

WHAT IS COLLABORATION?

Simply put, collaboration is working with another person or group of people toward some common goal. Collaboration can look different depending on the context and goals (Barfield,

2016). Regardless of the form it takes, collaboration involves deciding goals together with others, sharing responsibilities, and working together to achieve more than could be achieved by an individual on their own. Collaborative learning can be seen to occur through dialogue, social interaction, and joint decision-making with others, and these shared processes contribute greatly to individual and collective growth, as well as to co-constructed understanding and knowledge (p. 222).

True collaboration is a partnership where all parties understand and value the others' contributions to the benefit of all. Indeed, collaboration allows those involved to create something that is more than the sum of the parts and more than any individual could have managed alone. Adrienne Strock (2014) noted that it also alleviates some of the burden caused by shrinking budgets and growing responsibilities, ensuring that no one person has to be an expert in everything.

Special education expert E. Ann Knackendoffel (2007) observed that for collaboration to work, there must be mutual respect, trust, and communication. She suggested that there are several factors that lead to strong collaborative relationships: that collaboration is voluntary (even if mandated by administrators, those within the group must decide whether the effort will be truly collaborative); all participants have equal status, and their contributions are valued equally; it is based on at least one mutual goal; it depends on shared decision-making for the division of labor; it requires sharing resources, including time and energy; and it requires shared accountability for the outcomes (p. 2). Though the context of her research is in special education, it applies more

broadly to collaborative ventures across disciplines, including those in public libraries.

There are several models for school librarian and teacher collaboration according to librarian educator Jean Donham (2013), though few apply directly to public librarian collaboration with other librarians or community groups. However, the gist of those models is still relevant: Collaboration looks like a lot of different things, from informal conversations all the way up to planning large-scale events with multiple partners. Regardless of how involved the partnership is, working in teams can begin building relationships that will make the library a safer and more useful and enjoyable space for our child and teen patrons.

WHY COLLABORATE?

So, why should we collaborate? Working with others is, of course, not without its drawbacks. Maureen Cole (2017) noted that the price of collaboration is "compromise, patience, and time" (p. 76). Jean Donham (2013) suggested that the benefits of working together must be made explicit—especially if the teamwork is being imposed on the group by an administrator, for example—in order for it to be successful: "Teamwork requires trust in one another's contributions to the team's work, a no-risk environment for openly sharing ideas, and a shared commitment to the group's decisions" (p. 116). She stated that laying down some ground rules at the beginning of such a venture can help ensure that everything runs more smoothly. Some helpful strategies include ensuring all voices are heard, clarifying terms used so everyone is on the same page, and engaging in active listening.

There are several things to keep in mind when deciding whether and with whom to collaborate. Emotional intelligence matters; keep in mind your preferred style of learning—and that others may favor a different way. All involved should have the chance to offer their insight. Collaboration also requires an open mind, a willingness to adapt, and the ceding of at least some control, regardless of whether you have chosen your collaborators or someone else has. Compromise is the name of the game. By its very nature, working with others means no one person should have the authority to completely overrule the rest of the team; however, that does not mean that there should not be a group leader or moderator (Cole, 2017; Knackendoffel, 2007; Donham, 2013). Someone needs to keep track of all the moving parts and the deadlines and help ensure everything gets done. Sometimes that may be you, and sometimes that may be someone else. Even among the same group, such as a long-term committee or task force, collaborators' roles can change with each project. Sometimes you will have a lot of knowledge and experience to bring to the table, and sometimes you may be a sounding board for someone else—or anything in between. All of these roles are necessary.

As a result, some knowledge of community or local politics can be incredibly helpful to the success of the project. Knowing the history of the group or even whether your partner wants to work on this project with you or is being forced to can go a long way to making the collaboration successful. That being said, Maureen Cole (2017) noted that some partnerships will be more successful than others, and some projects do not require collaboration at all:

> Some ideas are worthy of collaboration and some aren't. Sometimes it's not only easier to do things on your own, but involving other people or groups is a waste of their time and yours. It's important to do some preliminary thinking about this before assuming that partners will be the secret ingredient to a fabulous creation. Not only are some projects not worthy of collaboration, some partners are not up to the task either. Don't just pile on partners so that you can claim a joint effort; make sure that those partners bring something to the table. It's not always possible to know the full extent of their contribution ahead of time, but it's worth thinking about. (p. 75)

Additionally, working collaboratively with others requires a great deal of effort. Nurturing the relationships, developing trust, creating a framework within which everyone works, even simply getting those you need on board takes persistence, patience, and resilience: "Partnerships must also be maintained, developed, and adjusted based on the dynamic nature of education and technology. All of this requires time, effort, and advocacy at all levels" (University of Wisconsin, 2014, para. 8).

All of this is to say that while collaboration does have its benefits, you should think carefully about what the goal of the project is and whether adding someone else to the mix will really be worthwhile. It often—but not always—is.

THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

What, then, are the benefits of collaboration? Some of the benefits are obvious, such as saving money and sharing resources (Knipp, Walker, Durney, & Perez, 2015). Anneke Larrance (2002) suggested that there are less obvious advantages, such as the learning benefits for all involved, patrons and staff alike, and the

synergy that happens when true collaboration and cooperation occur. Jean Donham (2013) proposed that there are three additional benefits to working with others that cannot occur if librarians continue to work alone: it can increase reflective thought and thinking about whether a program, book display, collection, or anything else has met the goals set in the planning stages; when working with others in the same building or library system, it can increase system-wide knowledge of what is going on at other departments or branches; and it can result in better teaching and learning for all involved.

Though there has not been as much research in the area of public librarians collaborating with others to benefit their child and young adult patrons, they can take a page from school librarianship—especially when it comes to how school librarians and other educators plan instruction. As discussed in Chapter 3, Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2005) observed that beginning planning with the outcome in mind makes for more successful instruction. With backward design, educators decide on what they want students to learn before bringing in resources, such as textbooks, or activities. This approach applies to collaboration, as well: Team members should decide what the purpose of the joint venture is and what they want the end product—whatever that may be—to look like before planning the details. This may seem like common sense, but Wiggins and McTighe argued that it is not, with many educators continuing to use a particular text or activity because that is the way it has always been done:

> Only by having specified the desired results can we focus on the content, methods, and activities most likely to achieve those results. But many teachers begin with and remain focused on textbooks, favored lessons, and time-

> honored activities—the inputs—rather than deriving those means from what is implied in the desired results—the output. To put it in an odd way, too many teachers focus on the teaching and not the learning. They spend most of their time thinking, first, about what they will do, what materials they will use, and what they will ask students to do rather than first considering what the learner will need in order to accomplish the learning goals. (p. 15)

By talking about the goals of the partnership and agreeing on what they are, we can help ensure that our collaboration bears fruit, instead of simply being another frustrating group work experience. Adrienne Strock (2014) listed five main benefits for public youth services librarians looking to work with others outside of their own building or branch: stretching budgets and sharing resources; expanding programming and other library offerings; strengthening relationships with other people and organizations in the community; learning new skills; and—perhaps the most important for youth services librarians—benefiting teens by giving them the chance to learn, share their passions, and gain positive adult relationships with those in the community.

Reflect

Think about your own collaborative experiences. What were the benefits for you personally? For your partner(s)? For the individuals and groups you serve?

THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN PUBLIC AND ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS

Public and academic libraries have, historically, not collaborated much. However, more and more they are finding

ways to work together. The Palm Harbor Library and St. Petersburg College's Tarpon Springs campus library (see spotlight box, below) formed an informal partnership based on shared values that included education and community involvement (Knipp et al., 2015). At first, they sought to learn from each other's service model and benefit from proximity; the two institutions are about four miles apart. They set up a half-day workshop with focus groups to concentrate on different areas, such as marketing, programming, and resources. They found common ground on three areas: planning a joint event, creating a shadowing program that would allow staff members from each library to engage one-on-one with a counterpart in the other library, and creating an ongoing social media or email collaboration channel.

Spotlight: Comics and Anime Convention at the Library

While academic and public libraries may seem to have differing missions, they can work together before to benefit students. Palm Harbor Library (Palm Harbor, Florida) and St. Petersburg College's Tarpon Springs campus library (Tarpon Springs, Florida) had an informal working arrangement that culminated in a comics and anime convention called Anime and Comics Enthusiast Convention, or ACEcon.

Paula Knipp and colleagues (2015) noted that both libraries have community involvement and benefiting students as part of their mission, and given their geographic proximity,

Image (Sakura Love) by Josue Gil from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

it made sense for them to work together. ACEcon was a two-day event meant to promote the two organizations to residents of the surrounding community while offering a fun activity. The libraries picked a comics and anime convention because of their popularity; both libraries also had relevant student organizations that showed interest in being a part of such an event. The libraries invited students and local enthusiasts, organizations, businesses, and media; this helped ensure a sense of shared ownership in ACEcon.

Both libraries deemed the venture a success on many different levels. It brought in people to both organizations who had not been there before. People wanted the event to continue and had ideas for the next year of ACEcon. It strengthened the bond between the two libraries, and both organizations want to expand their collaboration: "In the end, PHL and SPC's Tarpon Springs Campus Library succeeded in enriching the lives of current and potential users with an educational and entertaining experience, while also developing a partnership and encouraging the staff's personal growth and expression" (Knipp et al., 2015, p. 83).

Not all academic librarian and youth services public librarian partnerships have been as successful as the ACEcon example, showing the potential pitfalls of such a collaborative venture. George Aulisio and Sheli McHugh (2013), both academic librarians and researchers, sought to work with a public librarian to teach teens about sustainability and empower them to make changes in their schools, homes, and other places they hang

out. However, the academic librarians found that the teens did not leave the multi-session program feeling as though they could make a difference—mostly because the researchers did not take advantage of the youth librarian's expertise in creating programming for younger teens. Since they were familiar with information literacy instruction for college students, Aulisio and McHugh believed they were prepared to teach teenagers, but this turned out not to be the case. They concluded that "Spending additional time with the young adult librarian, discussing her pedagogy, and sharing more of the presentation with her would have made for a more enlightening session for the teens" (Aulisio & McHugh, p. 91).

Academic librarians and public librarians have complementary skill sets, and there is a tremendous benefit to both should they decide to work together; however, both must recognize the value of the other's skill set and not overestimate the importance of their own—a key part of any successful collaboration.

THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

Public and school libraries share tremendous overlap in their missions and service populations, and, as a result, they are natural collaborators. However, Don Latham, Heidi Julien, Melissa Gross, and Shelbie Witte (2016) found that, at least in STEM education, public and school librarians have not worked together as much as they could have, citing a lack of time and administrative support as the main reasons. Even so, they found that educators, school librarians, and public librarians all saw the value of

collaboration—especially when it came to benefitting students and teaching 21st century skills, such as science, technology, engineering, and math. Ross Todd (2008) observed that true collaboration has a positive effect on developing students' information literacy skills and increases the effectiveness of instruction.

Public and school librarians serve many of the same patrons and have similar missions, making them natural partners in many ways (Potter & Johnson, 2017). For example, traditional calendar school libraries may not be open to students over the summer, making the value of the public library clear in filling that gap. Given the budget constraints that both school and public libraries face, it is surprising that more youth service librarians and school media center coordinators are not turning to each other for collaboration; "in an effort to meet the needs of shared student patrons, school and public libraries look to collaborative ventures, sharing not only resources but also curriculum and programming objectives" (Potter & Johnson, p. 24).

Tonya Potter and Kara Johnson (2017) also suggested that school library and public library collaboration can be especially effective with three types of patrons: struggling readers, prolific readers, and preschool-age children. Though there are many studies documenting that the best remedy for struggling readers is for them to read books, that same research shows that many of these readers do not take advantage of summer reading programs held at public libraries. But some libraries are addressing this through collaboration. For example, in Denton, Texas, a partnership between four elementary schools, a university, and a public library system have turned the "summer slide" around,

engaging struggling readers in a coordinated program that includes school librarians participating in public library storytimes, public librarians making school visits, and publishing participants' names in the local newspaper; they found that "coordinated summer reading programs not only increased student participation, but also promoted the roles of the school library and public library in the community" (Potter & Johnson, 2017, p. 25).

Finally, getting young children reading and ready to attend school is critical—and an equity issue. Anne Fernald, Virginia Marchman, and Adriana Weisleder (2013) found that there are noticeable differences in the vocabulary and language processing skills in children from lower socioeconomic status families that are detectable when the child is as young as 18 months old. Public libraries can help close the word gap by increasing programming for preschool-aged children, and school libraries can help those efforts by encouraging parents with both school-age and preschool-age children to attend those programs. School librarians can also collect books aimed at younger children that older siblings can check out for them.

In addition to helping struggling and at-risk readers, collaboration between school and public libraries can also benefit prolific readers. Creating a reciprocal lending agreement between a school and public library can benefit youth who read a lot by granting them access to more books and lessening the risk that the book they want to read has already been checked out by another student (see the spotlight box, next page, for one example of such a collaboration).

Spotlight: Limitless Libraries

During the 2011-2012 academic year, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools faced a tremendous budget shortfall, which left the schools hurting for resources (Murvosh, 2013). Nashville (Tennessee) Public Library stepped in, loaning some 97,000 resources to the district's middle and high schools—everything from DVDs to books to CDs. The Limitless Libraries program, which started out as a way for a city struggling under the budget constraints of the 2008 recession to stretch its dollars, has led to more collaboration between the school system and the public library. The collaboration has allowed the school libraries to weed their collections of outdated materials while expanding the resources available to students and teachers, and the public libraries have gained new patrons who had not previously used the facilities or the collection (Bengel, 2013).

In addition to engaging English language learners and struggling readers, who find the public library's collection of audiobooks and ebooks especially engaging, Limitless Libraries has increased circulation at school libraries and public library branches in Nashville. Because student identification cards function as public library cards, it is easy for students to borrow resources from the library; additionally,

Image (partnership) by Vectors Market from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

students can place a hold on a resource in the public library and have it delivered to their school, making it possible for students who cannot go to the public library to access those resources (Bengel, 2013).

The collaboration between Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools and Nashville Public Library has resulted in more school librarians participating in public library programs, and public and school librarians in Nashville have begun working more closely together on individual projects: "In short, everyone has started to communicate more about how best to serve students" (Bengel, 2013, n.p.).

THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN PUBLIC LIBRARIANS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

There are so many opportunities for youth librarians to work with community groups. The first step, of course, is knowing your community and knowing what is out there. What do your teens need? What obstacles do they face for getting those needs met? What groups in the community are already working to meet those needs? Answering these and similar questions will help youth librarians not only to not duplicate work that is already being done by others in the community but also find potential collaborators and needs that are not being met elsewhere.

Paula Knipp and colleagues (2015) also highlighted the value of using the libraries' physical space even as more and more of people's lives go online; many communities no longer have a common gathering space, and libraries can fill that function: "Even

as the world becomes increasingly digitized, there is still a strong need to have a physical space in which to engage the community with program offerings for varied interest groups" (p. 75). Instead of simply being a warehouse for materials, libraries can host events that bring community members together, such as clubs, movie showings, and even more ambitious events such as festivals and conventions (Exner, 2012; Robertson, 2005).

Simply opening your space up for community groups may not seem like collaboration, but it is, in fact, an easy way to foster better relationships and get more teens in the door. It can lead to more in-depth partnerships as trust builds between the library, the community group, and its members. For example, members of the Public Library Association have created partnerships with garden clubs, recreation departments, and veterans groups (Struzziero, 2017).

Another interesting partnership is that between a public library and a film festival. The Louisville (Kentucky) Free Public Library teamed up with the Louisville International Festival of Films to create the Kentucky Youth Film Festival, which was meant to give teens of different means and abilities an outlet for creative expression (Thomas, 2017). Ninth- through twelfth-graders across Kentucky can enter the competition in three different categories; selected films are awarded prizes. The two organizations also held a weeklong filmmaking workshop at the library to help promote the festival and get more teens involved. The collaboration helped the library connect to the teens' interests and give them an outlet in a supportive environment, promoted both organizations to potential patrons across the region (and the

state), and benefited not only the organizations involved but also the city of Louisville.

But libraries can do more to benefit youth in our communities, especially in communities that have felt ignored or forgotten—or worse—by local governments or other organizations. "Because public libraries are typically well-respected and trusted fixtures in most communities, they are an excellent arena to help bridge the gaps between different demographics and community organizations" (Kaser, 2015, para. 3). The American Library Association and National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation's *Libraries Transforming Communities: Models for Change* program also shows the value of library-community group collaboration: "It seeks to introduce libraries to various dialogue and deliberation approaches, enabling libraries to foster conversation and lead change in their communities" (American Library Association, n.d.). Using this model, the Hartford (Connecticut) Public Library has begun working with the community to strengthen its relationship with the police force (Kaser, 2015). The library hosted community discussions where residents could air their concerns; because of those discussions, Hartford Public Library then held three listening sessions between Hartford residents and the police. From those sessions came the idea to hold a less formal event, such as a block party, to allow community members and police officers to see each other in a different light, which has resulted in better understanding between the police and the community.

For another example of a public library that is using community partnerships to reach traditionally underserved communities, see the spotlight box on the next page.

Spotlight: Bringing the Library Home in Chicago

The Chicago Public Library and Chicago Housing Authority have teamed up to offer programming and resources aimed at people of all ages who live in city housing developments; some mixed-income housing developments will also become home to their own small library branches, in essence bringing the library to them.

Library space will be available for social workers to give workshops and lead parent training sessions, and there will be programming aimed at children, teens, and adults; additional collaboration comes in the form of undergraduate education students at a local university providing preschool programming (Lambert, 2016). The collaboration allows the library to reach a potentially vulnerable population of people who were not using the library; it provides "a tangible positive to [the] community" (Kaser, 2015, para. 5).

Image (Apartments) by Made, AU from Noun Project; licensed under Creative Commons.

CONCLUSION

At its best, collaboration brings out the finest work from all involved. Youth librarians in a public library setting have the opportunity to work with others inside and outside their building in order to benefit their youth patrons. Working in isolation—

especially given shrinking budgets and increasing workloads—is no longer a viable option. To give teen patrons the best, teen librarians must work with others in a variety of ways, big and small.

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Chapter 10
Assessing Learning in the Public Library

By Tessa Gibson

You've just wrapped up a fanfiction writing workshop for tweens at your public library, and you are feeling great about how the program went. You planned the program with specific learning goals in mind, used multiple instructional approaches to differentiate the content for diverse learners, and collaborated with a local adult fanfiction club to bring in mentor authors to work with participants. You know that 16 tweens attended, and you know that they left with smiles on their faces—but do you know what they learned?

The rise of instruction as a central service in public libraries raises questions about best practices and standards for assessing learning in this space. While there is a wealth of supporting literature on programming in public libraries, very little research examines the importance of learning outcomes and assessment. David Carr, a contributor to the National Impact of Library Public Programs Assessment, stated that "programming is effective to the degree it serves the authentic needs and interests of its target participants" (American Library Association, 2014, p. 17). Assessment helps librarians determine if their instruction, as designed, is aligned with their library's mission and whether it is

effectively meeting the needs or interests of the community. Regular assessment also informs how instruction is planned and framed within the context of learners' existing skills and the cultural factors or norms that may influence learning outcomes. The lack of literature on learning outcomes and assessment in public libraries is, therefore, surprising, since there are evident benefits to both the library and its patrons.

However, examining assessment in a public library setting is not a simple task. Instruction in this space is typically designed to facilitate informal learning, a drastic contrast to the more structured lessons taught in school or academic libraries. Furthermore, it can be difficult to measure intangible outcomes that distinguish learning in the public library, such as emotional or developmental gains (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2000). This chapter will discuss what literature can be found on the subject and will extrapolate from tried-and-true assessment strategies used in school or academic libraries to suggest a way forward for assessing learning in the public library.

ASSESSMENT IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Assessment strategies are already present in most libraries to some extent. Statistics on circulating materials, interlibrary loans, and program attendance are small examples of how libraries use assessment strategies to evaluate their services. These are useful measures, but without additional information, they say very little about the impact the library has on its patrons and the community. Assessment in the public library should serve as a catalyst for a greater understanding of the library's influence on patron learning

and growth (Kirk, 1999). This information and its supporting documentation can serve the library in a number of ways.

According to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (2000), federal agencies and the public increasingly value accountability measures. Grants and other funding opportunities now require evidence of program results and patron satisfaction. Assessment measures produce tangible data that libraries can use to maintain the support of federal or public institutions and solicit external funding. The purpose of assessment in public libraries goes well beyond accountability, however. Assessing program designs, learning outcomes, and learner experience is central to informed decisions about revisions to management, policies or procedures, and mission statements. This knowledge helps libraries effectively respond to changes within the community and continuously meet patrons' needs (American Library Association, 2014). Communities engage with the library's programs and services in unique ways. Becoming familiar with the community's diverse needs and experiences guides the library's progress.

Integrating assessment as a regular practice also enables the public library to connect its services to educational gains in the academic system. Connected learning opportunities can positively affect participants' academic performance on learning goals and standardized tests (Urban Libraries Council, 2016). Accordingly, it can help schools close the achievement gap by giving children in need greater access to educational resources and opportunities outside of school hours (Metropolitan Group & Urban Libraries Council, 2015). Assessment is a significant point of engagement with the school curriculum and opens the public library to partnerships with other organizations.

Additionally, a strong collaborative relationship with schools and other academic institutions may challenge some of the disadvantages that low-income and marginalized children encounter during their education. Black, Hispanic, and low-income children are twice as likely to drop out of high school as their peers, due to barriers that hinder learning from elementary school onward (Council of the Great City Schools, Institute of Museum and Library Services, & Urban Libraries Council, 2016). Libraries are uniquely positioned to help children and their families confront these obstacles. For instance, bookmobiles can meet low-income children without transportation where they are, and children or families with limited language skills can be accommodated by the flexibility of programming or variety of material formats the library offers (Council of the Great City Schools & Urban Libraries Council, 2016). Assessment strategies that evaluate program efficacy and introduce the library to new partnerships consequently facilitate the empowerment of diverse patrons as learners.

PLANNING ASSESSMENTS

Assessment strategies require a substantial amount of planning before being effectively implemented alongside a program. In fact, one of the barriers to proper assessment in public libraries is the amount of time and staff training that accompanies it. There are two simple details to consider when planning assessments to ensure their efficacy: the program design and intended learning outcomes.

The type of assessment depends heavily on the structure and design of the program. This will be discussed in depth later in

the chapter, but, suffice to say, certain factors will affect which assessment strategy is appropriate and effective. The social or cultural characteristics of the audience are especially relevant. For instance, a reading program designed for children and families with limited English skills will require a different assessment strategy than a program developed for white young adults in a rural community (Council of the Great City Schools & Urban Libraries Council, 2016). The structure of the program will also influence assessment strategies. In order to carry out a longitudinal design or an assessment strategy over multiple time scales, the program will need to be sustainable. Assessment is only effective when it fits the program it accompanies.

Clearly defined learning outcomes are necessary when choosing an assessment strategy. Librarians must know what they want to assess before they design an approach —an impossibility without established learning outcomes for the program. Assessment strategies can evaluate a number of learning gains, from content knowledge to developmental outcomes. However, no assessment strategy or program design is perfect. There will be unexpected outcomes that librarians can't anticipate (Blummer, 2007). Some of these have practical value to the learner, while others have a deep-level impact on social or emotional growth. Furthermore, learning outcomes can easily become a method of control and accountability that restricts patrons' agency while learning and reinforces the opportunity gap (Gregory & Higgins, 2017). Remaining mindful of this during assessment and using learning outcomes to develop instruction within your library can help you accommodate unexpected outcomes that enrich your program and make the public library unique.

OUTCOME-BASED EVALUATION

It is difficult to organize public library assessment strategies into distinct categories due to the literature gap on the subject. However, there is some precedent in both research and practice within more formal learning environments that examines tried-and-true techniques as well as more innovative approaches. When used to evaluate learning gains from library programming, these can be collectively referred to as *outcome-based evaluation*, with "outcome" defined as any benefit to participants. Programs that are created to benefit patrons have inherent learning goals that can be articulated and assessed. Outcome-based evaluation involves determining what evidence will illustrate these desired changes. (Birnbaum, n.d.). Outcome-based evaluations can be either quantitative or qualitative. We will explore each approach in more depth below.

QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Quantitative measures produce numerical results or data that hopefully speak to the impact of library instruction on individuals or groups of learners. Librarians are usually more comfortable with quantitative assessment strategies because they don't require direct participation or consent from patrons, meaning they are less time-intensive and perhaps more familiar to the librarian (Farrell & Mastel, 2016). Quantitative metrics demand less training to collect and interpret, are typically easy to communicate, and are often preferred by library administrators who are tasked with justifying the cost of library resources, staff, and services. Quantitative data can be collected related to several aspects of instruction.

Use of Space and Resources

Measures that speak to the physical use of the library space and resources are often immediately observable for librarians, digitally or physically. Traffic through the library's spaces is perhaps the best example of this data. Foot traffic can be observed from the desk, the door, or with visible marks throughout the space. Most websites and social media platforms offer statistics on traffic through digital spaces, as well. Inquiries via the library's digital reference service, if available, and at the reference desk are also useful measures of library use (Urban Libraries Council, 2016). This data is representative of how people move through the library's spaces and can consequently inform program design and learning outcomes.

Engagement

Quantitative metrics can also show surface-level measurements of engagement with library instruction. Barbara Blummer (2007) suggested that the amount of time spent on libguides or online tutorials and the number of mouse clicks can illustrate how patrons engage with these online services. Attendance at programs or events and the circulation of targeted materials are simple assessments of patron interest in programs as well as further learning. This data is easy to collect during and after the event.

Individual Growth

Some librarians are taking an innovative approach to generating numerical data that represents learning gains by adapting school-based approaches to the public library. Karen

Diller and Sue Phelps (2008) advocated for electronic portfolios, arguing that they are authentic portrayals of student learning and reflection, so long as they center on learning outcomes. Assessment rubrics have also been introduced to the public library, particularly in summer reading programs, to give librarians a better sense of patrons' level of learning. These forms of assessment complement longitudinal methods of study and are time-intensive.

Public librarians have also taken cues from gaming culture, introducing loyalty programs and achievement-based programs as forms of assessment. Virtual badges, for example, delineate the progress learners are making toward learning goals and competencies with digital milestones (Urban Libraries Council, 2016). This gamification of learning is intended to leave patrons with a sense of achievement and increased motivation. Librarians can use these milestones to evaluate patrons' skill levels before and after relevant programming.

Shared Data

The popular adage, "it takes a village to raise a child" aptly summarizes the importance of shared data, which is imperative when collaborating with schools, city or state organizations, and other public institutions (Urban Libraries Council, 2015). Librarians are in a unique position to facilitate a coordinated approach to educational gains. Their flexibility allows them to design programs to meet patrons' diverse learning needs and to engage disinterested or discouraged students. However, public libraries cannot identify patrons in need of assistance or support without the cooperation of local schools or city organizations (Council of the Great City Schools & Urban

Libraries Council, 2016). Sharing data can help all parties of interests assess the efficacy of programming by correlating participation, engagement, and other metrics from the public library with academic metrics such as reading gains and standardized test scores, and county or city demographic data.

QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Qualitative measures generate non-numerical information that, in this context, expresses learners' experience of the library and its services. Because this data tends to be narrative or anecdotal, it may require more time and staff training; even so, qualitative assessment strategies can capture learning outcomes that are missed by quantitative measures. Shannon Farrell and Kristen Mastel (2016) suggested that many librarians are unfamiliar with these methods and are consequently uncomfortable implementing them in a public library setting. However, the push toward assessment and formalized learning goals has inspired many librarians to bring qualitative measures to the public forum.

Internal Assessment

The foremost measure of effective learning goals should be the library's mission statement. Programs in both academic and public libraries are most effective when they support the organizational goals of the library (Farrell & Mastel, 2016). Coworkers can provide helpful feedback about the alignment of learning outcomes with the purpose of the program and the library's mission statement.

Feedback can also be solicited during regularly scheduled staff meetings, which provide a convenient forum for group assessments. Staff members can discuss emerging best practices, evaluate recent programs, and determine how assessment results will influence future programming or events (Urban Libraries Council, 2016). This offers a sounding board with consistent and diverse feedback that enables individuals, and the team, to modify their approach to education and assessment in the library.

Reflective practice is a means of internal assessment that is, unfortunately, frequently overlooked in practice and literature (Farrell & Mastel, 2016). Asking what went well or what didn't work, in your personal experience of the program, can help immediately identify points of improvement and guide future modifications to the program or assessment design. Self-reflection is most beneficial when used in conjunction with other assessment strategies.

Surveys

Surveys are a traditional form of qualitative assessment (they can also provide quantitative data, depending on the questions included). They give learners the opportunity to report on the program and their learning gains from a personal point of view (Urban Libraries Council, 2016). Learner feedback can suggest how the program or its assessment should be modified, or what worked well enough to be carried forward. Surveys can be solicited face to face during or after a program, in focus groups, with a postcard or written form after a program, or through an online submission point (Blummer, 2007). These methods have

been successfully implemented in libraries and other public institutions for decades.

There are more innovative approaches to the traditional survey that may influence patron participation. The survey can be introduced to the digital age with more than an online form (Farrell & Mastel, 2016). Comments on social media platforms in response to a prompt from the library could be considered a form of survey data. Short recordings, such as "stories" or "vox pops," can also be very impactful. Since these methods are less anonymous, it's important that the patron is informed and consents to participate and have their thoughts shared. Surveys give participants the chance to directly express their thoughts and feelings in a functional format.

Observations

Observations are straightforward and self-defined, but they do require awareness before, after, and during the program. Documenting how patrons engage with the program through written notes or photographs is a practical examination of the program's success (Farrell & Mastel, 2016; Urban Libraries Council, 2016). It is also convenient, since it only requires that the librarian be present and equally engaged.

To get the fullest possible understanding of the impacts of your instruction on learners, you will likely want to utilize some combination of quantitative and qualitative assessment. For an example of a public library that effectively combined multiple forms of assessment, read about the Plano (Texas) Public Library below.

Spotlight: Project Outcome at the Plano Public Library

The Plano Public Library in Plano, TX, serves a large and diverse community. Because their mission statement emphasizes outreach to children, teenagers, and their families, Plano Public Library designed three new programs to meet the perceived needs of these patrons: a storytime and an art program for children, as well as a technology program for teenagers (ORS Impact, 2017). The library felt that the programs were going well but wanted a more concrete assessment of patrons' reception to these services. None of the staff members had training or experience with assessment, so the Plano Public Library reached out to Project Outcome for support.

Project Outcome is a free toolkit that provides resources, training, and assessment tools designed to help public libraries determine, "What good did we do?" It was created by the Performance Measurement Task Force of the Public Library Association as a three-year project attempting to standardize best practices for assessment in the public library (Public Library Association, 2017). They help measure patron knowledge, confidence, application, and awareness in seven key library service areas. The toolkit and further

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information can be found at www.projectoutcome.org.

In addition to their statistics on circulation and attendance, the Plano Public Library conducted two surveys that solicited thoughts and comments from parents. They discovered that while parents and their young children enjoyed the programs, teenagers felt unsatisfied with their options. Additionally, there were patrons with unique needs who couldn't fully participate. The library staff modified the programs to include a sensory storytime designed for children over-stimulated in large groups, a Storytime Around the World featuring children's books in different languages, a collection of new technology kits for teenagers, and an arts program open to children of all ages.

The response from the community astonished library staff. When they performed the same assessments a month later, it revealed a community that felt heard. Circulation of foreign language materials dramatically increased, as did attendance at all programs, but the most informative feedback came from the patrons' testimonials. Parents and their children were comforted by the diverse services and materials, reporting that they felt included and accepted in the public space. Parents appreciated how the technology kits fostered collaboration and positive interactions with their teenagers. The art program helped teenagers and children create projects they didn't have the means to create at home or at school. The assessment strategies equipped the Plano Public Library with the insight they needed to respond to their community's needs and created a diverse space that opened opportunities for its learners.

BARRIERS TO ASSESSMENT

Despite advocacy on behalf of assessment in public libraries, there are still challenges that create barriers to entry for librarians interested in the practice. Assessment strategies require staff training, to some extent, and a substantial time investment to be effective. Many strategies can be implemented immediately before, during, or after a program. These strategies are often preferred and commonly used by librarians because they provide immediate feedback on what learning may have occurred (Farrell & Mastel, 2016). However, change is not always immediately observable. The most accurate measure of patron learning can best be determined over time with multiple time scales or longitudinal designs (Lemke, Lecusay, Cole, & Michalchik, 2015). This is especially true for public libraries and other social institutions, whose work cannot always be benchmarked against formal learning institutions for comparison (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2000). Long-term benefits and positive changes to learners in the community must, therefore, be periodically examined over time. Many librarians can't design and implement scaled assessment strategies because they simply don't have the time or training.

Some librarians are daunted by the feat of designing an assessment strategy. It is an objectively complex task that requires an understanding of the library's mission, the program's learning outcomes, and what the librarian needs to know. Quantitative data offers a shallow representation of patron learning and engagement that, while easily understood, can be difficult to interpret in terms of deep impact (Farrell & Mastel, 2016). Such data alone are not always helpful to libraries, whose mission and

informal learning opportunities seek to inspire, motivate, and change the individual in addition to instilling content knowledge (American Library Association, 2014). Libraries must find a way to measure the personal gains that demonstrate our very purpose as a public institution, but it can be incredibly challenging to represent this change in a tangible way (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2000). Determining assessment strategies that are well balanced and capable of capturing unobservable changes is an intimidating task that requires training or self-education.

Assessment can go awry even after a library takes initiative to implement the practice, due to the misuse of assessment in public libraries. As Rebecca Morris (2015) explained, there is a distinction between "assessment OF learning" and "assessment FOR learning" (p. 106). Librarians as educators and patrons as learners must be equal partners in assessment. Unfortunately, librarians who do implement assessment strategies often use them for the sole purpose of soliciting support or funding rather than the improvement of program design or content. Grants and other financial supporters do require evidence of community impact and learning to hold organizations accountable for the proper use of funding (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2000). However, engaging in assessment as a regular practice is ineffective if librarians don't also use it for the development and growth of their public services.

The current lack of assessment in public libraries is also a barrier in and of itself. Assessment is not inherently considered relevant to programming and patron learning. In fact, "assessment is often viewed as an 'add on' research effort or special project rather than as something integral to the operation of the library

and management of its programs" (Kirk, 1999, p. 1). Because it is not an integrated practice, bringing assessment strategies into the public library requires a cultural shift among the staff and its management (Urban Libraries Council, 2016). Changing the culture of any workplace requires dedication and consistency, particularly when staff members are engrained in the current way of being and supported by lack of precedence in the field.

Libraries are incredibly diverse. They serve a variety of communities, cultures, and patrons with sometimes very different missions. Programming predominantly focuses on new knowledge, skills, or personal gains, yet varies in format and content. The extreme variety between libraries makes a standard approach to assessment exceedingly difficult to define (American Library Association, 2014). The studies that do examine or advocate standards for best practice are scattered and inconsistent, with various definitions of the same terms and conflicting purposes (Becker, 2015). There are professionals who firmly believe in the importance of assessment strategies in the public library and pursue this objective with forums or councils in the hopes of designing standards that support all libraries in that enterprise, yet there are currently no widely accepted standards or tools in place.

CONCLUSION

The concept of assessing learning is fairly new in public libraries, but despite the distinct literature gap on the subject, researchers and practitioners have started a conversation about the relevance of assessment strategies to effective public service. Assessment demonstrates the efficacy of programming for patron learning, its alignment with organizational values or mission, and

how these things can be improved (Birnbaum, n.d.). Librarians can readily find precedents for successful assessment strategies in pioneering public libraries and academic settings (Becker, 2015). There are certainly drawbacks to each assessment strategy. Quantitative measures alone represent outputs—numerical data that only illustrate the physical results of a service, like attendance or circulation—rather than outcomes, the benefits patrons experience as result of their participation (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2000). On the other hand, some librarians are concerned that qualitative strategies may violate patron privacy, which is a core ethical principle of librarianship (American Library Association, 2014). However, the disparate nature of assessment strategies is precisely why they are effective when integrated into a single approach. This flexibility allows libraries to work from their strengths and create an accessible entry-point to implementing assessment. This is the time to collaboratively work toward a standard for best practice and to demonstrate our necessity not only as providers of public services but also as agents of change.

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Chapter 11
Professional Development and Growth

By Dezarae Osborne

The concept of "lifelong learning" is central to the mission and values of the public library. Usually, we talk about wanting to facilitate the lifelong learning of our library users; while this is critical, our focus on turning others into lifelong learners can sometimes mean that we neglect our own needs for continued growth, particularly when it comes to our professional learning. Yet, as a field, our understandings related to teaching and learning continue to evolve, and we must evolve with them if we want to provide the best possible instruction for the children and teens we serve. That means that we must engage in *professional development* related to our role as educators within the public library setting. In this chapter, we will explore some of the ways that public librarians can effectively and efficiently accomplish this.

WHAT IS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Professional development refers to a wide variety of specialized training, education, or professional learning intended to help professionals improve their knowledge, skill, and effectiveness. People in a variety of fields participate in professional development, and instructional librarians are no

exception. Professional development is usually thought of as a formal, structured process, but professional development in informal contexts is also important and can provide different types of information compared to formal professional development. Other frequently used names for professional development include:

- Staff development
- Training
- Professional learning
- Continuing education

Professional development can take place on site at your library, at a separate location, or online through webinars. The variety of locations make it easy to incorporate professional development into your work schedule.

Many who have experience professional development have a negative view of the process. It is frequently done as a one-hour workshop where an instructor attempts to pass on a vast amount of information through a lecture. This type of learning is minimally engaging and leaves many librarians with a distaste for professional development. However, this doesn't need to be the norm. Professional development can come in a variety of formats, including:

- *Courses or workshops*: One or more sessions on a subject matter, method, or other library related topic;
- *Conferences*: Library professionals gather to discuss new research and issues within the field;

- *Individual or collaborative research*: Usually on a topic of personal interest, potentially later published in a research or practitioner journal;
- *Peer mentoring*: Working with other youth librarians at a similar point in their career to discuss issues and developments in the field;
- *Reading literature*: Keeping up with the latest research and discussion in research and practitioner journals; and
- *Online webinars and chats*: Many organizations, such as Teaching Tolerance (www.tolerance.org). host regular webinars and/or Twitter chats that focus on teaching, learning, and/or libraries.

See the spotlight box below for a real-life example of professional development that goes far beyond the standard one-hour workshop.

Spotlight: The Lilead Fellows Program

The Lilead Fellows program is a professional development program for district level school library supervisors. The program is funded by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and uses research-based principles that result in high quality professional development for educators. These principles include making time for follow-up after

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extensive professional development activities, focusing on daily activities of the educators, having mentors to guide participants, using technology to enhance engagement, and making time for personal reflections.

The eighteen-month-long program means that fellows can implement ideas they create and develop skills they were being taught. Participants are paired with mentors who are passionate about their work, and they can focus on issues important to them. This take on professional development is distinct from the one-shot professional development sessions that are frequently the norm, and a program like this could easily be adapted for youth services and other librarians who are focused on instruction in their public libraries.

WHY IS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IMPORTANT?

Professional development is a critical part of any professional's career, and it is especially critical for librarians. While library science programs generally do a good job informing their students about broad themes and practical skills they will need on the job, libraries are constantly changing. Instructional librarians who work with youth need to stay up to date on new instructional methods, child development research, emerging technologies, and updated laws. Professional development can help librarians keep up to date, so they can provide the best service to their community. Professional learning expert Hayes Mizell (2010) captured the importance of professional development for educators, stating that "professional development provides ongoing opportunities for educators to

continue to improve their knowledge and skills so they can help students achieve. When educators learn, students learn more" (p. 19).

Professional development also helps librarians become better advocates for libraries and the services they provide to the community. Being aware of trends in the information and library science field can help librarians make convincing arguments to people investing time or funds in libraries, like donors, library boards, and general members of the community. Some public libraries may have a requirement for their staff to do some sort of professional learning throughout the year and may also have money in the budget to fund travel to conferences or pay for workshops. This varies from library to library, so it is always important to be aware of policies and ask if uncertain.

PLANNING FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As we've mentioned, librarianship is a rapidly changing field; there will always be something new for you to learn through professional development. To keep your professional learning manageable and productive, it's important to set goals for yourself. Like the goals you write for children and teens, your personal learning goals should be meaningful, manageable, and measurable (which does not necessarily mean quantifiable). See Chapter 4 for more guidance on writing learning goals. Your goals should also be tied to a particular timeframe. In K–12 schools and academic libraries, the school year provides a natural duration for professional learning plans, and librarians in these settings are often required to write formal professional growth plans (PGPs). Your library organization may not require formal documentation

of your learning goals, but it can still be helpful for your own purposes to write them down and set a timeline for their achievement.

In the rest of this chapter, we will explore some of the forms that professional development can take, and some of the most valuable sources for professional development related to teaching and learning.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORKS

Professional learning networks (PLNs) are a form of ongoing professional development that usually occurs in school settings but can easily be applied to a youth service librarian context. Mary Ann Harlan (2009) defined PLNs as "the people with whom you surround yourself, the tools you use, and the resources you rely on to introduce yourself to new ideas and best practices" (p. 1). A professional learning network can be structured around a specific learning goal, in which case the group may only meet for a short period of time, or it may be ongoing, with learning activities and goals evolving over time. The size of PLNs also varies widely.

When applying the concept of PLNs to youth services librarians in public libraries, the key change is the people who are involved. For school librarians, local PLNs (or professional learning communities—PLCs—as they're often called in the school setting) typically include teachers at their school; support staff in the school, like guidance counselors and Exceptional Children support staff; and other school librarians in the district. Like school librarians, youth service librarians are often isolated, frequently working as the only youth-focused staff member at their branch or

working with one or two colleagues. This means that the people in their PLN may be located outside their library. Potential members of a youth services professional learning network include children and teen librarians in a shared library system; youth services librarians in a region or state; and members of youth services professional organizations like the American Library Association (ALA) or the Young Adult Library Services Organization (YALSA). Youth services librarians in public librarians can also reach out to school librarians in their area to discuss collaboration and inclusion in PLNs. After all, school librarians and youth services librarians at public libraries are largely serving the same community of youth.

Professional learning networks do not have to meet face to face for powerful learning to occur. Social networks can be a valuable tool to expand professional contacts and form PLNs who can then meet digitally. Twitter makes it easy to find like-minded colleagues through its search and suggestion features, and Twitter chats are also a great way to connect with professionals who share your interests. Facebook groups also provide opportunities to connect with potential PLN members; the website *5 Minute Librarian* lists dozens of these groups in two posts from 2016 and 2018 (https://bit.ly/1NzFT6d and https://bit.ly/2NWulNH). We will discuss online professional development in more depth later in this chapter. Additional resources for librarians related to developing PLNs are listed on the next page.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Professional associations are a great place to find professional development opportunities. There are organizations

Resources to Develop Your PLN

- Explore the PLN Starter Kit created by "Library Girl," aka teacher-librarian Jennifer LaGarde: http://www.livebinders.com/play/play_or_edit?id=441748
- Watch the archived recording of the ALSC webinar "Create a Personal Learning Network that Works for You," facilitated by the Joint Chiefs of the Storytime Underground: http://www.ala.org/alsc/creatingyourpln
- Read the blog post "My Online PLN," by Melissa Eleftherion Carr, a Teen and Adult Services Librarian with Mendocino County Libraries: https://apoetlibrarian.wordpress.com/2012/12/02/my-online-pln/

for a wide variety of interests and many have smaller sections that focus on specific topics like instruction, programming, or collection development. The following professional organizations may be of interest to youth services librarians focusing on instruction in their public library:

- *American Library Association (ALA)*: The national association for librarians in America. ALA focuses on four key areas: advocacy; information policy; professional and leadership development; and equity, diversity, and inclusion; http://www.ala.org/;
- *Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)*: A division of ALA for librarians, library workers, and

advocates who want libraries to better serve teens; http://www.ala.org/yalsa/;

- *American Association for School Librarians (AASL):* A division of ALA that is focused on school librarians and the school library community; http://www.ala.org/aasl/;
- *Association of Library Services for Children (ALSC):* A division of ALA dedicated to library service for children. ALSC seeks to support and advance library services and build healthy, successful futures for all children; http://www.ala.org/alsc/;
- *Public Library Association (PLA):* A division of ALA dedicated to supporting the needs of public libraries and the librarians who work there; http://www.ala.org/pla/;
- *Library and Information Technology Association (LITA):* A division of ALA that seeks to provide education and services for information and library professionals. LITA empowers libraries through use of and education about new technologies; http://www.ala.org/lita/;
- *International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA):* A global organization that works on behalf of all types of libraries and library workers; https://www.ifla.org/; and
- *International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE):* A global organization that aims to help educators, including librarians, solve educational problems through technology; https://www.iste.org/.

There are also state and regional professional associations that may provide additional opportunities and resources separate from the national organizations. Local and

state organizations can often have an easier and less expensive path of entry. Some education associations may also provide resources pertaining to instruction that can be applied in a public library context.

Membership

Joining a professional organization can require a large investment of money but can also provide access to many resources and opportunities that non-members don't have access to. Choose one or two professional organizations to join based on needs or interests and take advantage of freely available resources provided by other organizations. Most of the organizations listed above provide a discount for student members, so it may be useful to join early and take advantage of the discount. Some libraries or library systems may subsidize or cover the cost of membership for their staff members, so you should inquire about this possibility at your organization.

Online Resources

Most professional organizations provide professional development resources to their members for free on their websites. For example, the Public Library Association has a section on their site for online learning, including live webinars, on-demand webinars, and online workbooks on a variety of topics related to public libraries. The American Library Association and its divisions provide similar online resources which are easily accessible through their respective websites if you are a current member of the organization. Some resources are available to non-members as well.

Conferences

Professional associations hold conferences on a regular basis to discuss issues within the community, celebrate progress made, and present new research. Conferences provide librarians with "an almost countless amount of opportunities to learn, network, and connect" (Ludwig, 2011, p. 186). However, it isn't always easy to attend conferences. Many require expensive registration fees and offer extra sessions that, while relevant to youth services, cost an additional fee. Travel costs must also be considered, since national conferences are hosted at a rotating list of cities that may not always be conveniently located; as a result, most librarians will need to take time off work to attend. With shrinking budgets, many libraries are unable to pay for librarians to attend conferences.

Even with these considerations, conferences remain a fantastic professional development opportunity. The following conferences may be of particular interest to youth services librarians:

- *ALA Annual*: The annual conference offered by the American Library Association. Typically held at the end of June, this conference provides opportunities to meet vendors, network with colleagues, and attend lectures and professional development sessions.
- *PLA*: Biennnual conference offered by the Public Library Association that has previously offered sessions specific to youth services librarians.
- *YALSA Young Adult Services Symposium*: Annual conference offered by the Young Adult Library Services Association in November. The conference offers sessions

on young adult literature, technology and youth, programming for teens, library outreach, and more.

Just as there are state professional organizations, some states offer state conferences for librarians, or other conferences that may be relevant to library work. These conferences are smaller and tend to be less expensive and closer. State conferences can be a good option for a first conference when just beginning to enter the world of professional development and organization conferences. State conferences are also a good opportunity to present since there are fewer people and less pressure.

ONLINE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sometimes travelling for professional development doesn't fit into the library's budget or time constraints. Online resources provide another option for librarians to continue their education and keep up to date.

Websites

Librarians can learn much from the practices of other librarians, and library websites are a good place to start when looking for information about other libraries. Public library websites can include information on programming and collections, which can inform decisions on programming and collecting at your library. Contact information for library staff is often listed on library websites, which can be used to reach out to librarians for information on their best practices when working with youth in an instructional setting. Good places to start when looking for great examples of public libraries are journals and professional

association websites, which both feature public libraries that are doing good work. One website that often highlights public librarians who are engaging in instructional practice is *Programming Librarian* (http://www.programminglibrarian.org/).

Blogs

While blogs aren't as popular as they were in the early 2010s, there are still high quality youth service blogs being updated regularly. One example is the YALSA blog (http://yalsa.ala.org/blog/), which frequently posts information about professional learning. The blog also connects readers with examples of youth service librarians and their programs that are working to improve the lives of youth. The blog site features an entire category on professional learning, which includes posts covering examples of professional development sessions, interviews with professionals, and toolkits for applying the information on the blog. The YALSA blog is worth monitoring on a regular basis for its professional learning content as well as other materials.

Social Media

Librarians are quickly migrating to social media from blogs and other online forms of networking. Social media provides quick access to communication and allows users to share articles easily. Carl Harvey (2012) notes that the rise in ownership of personal devices gives people the opportunity to access resources anywhere and at any time, which means professional learning can take place on the go.

Twitter packs a punch with its 280-character per-tweet limit, and many librarians are using Twitter as an opportunity to connect with other professionals for learning and support purposes. Many professional organizations have Twitter accounts that they use to share information about upcoming opportunities, interesting articles, and general updates. Many public libraries also have Twitter accounts that can be used to share information about programming and best practices. Education professionals can also be useful to follow on Twitter to keep up to date on instructional methods and child development.

Twitter comes with the caveat that following an individual may result in seeing personal content that isn't relevant for professional development. Privacy is also a concern for some library professionals on Twitter, as is the possibility of harassment on the platform. One option to minimize these risks is to have a private account that can only be viewed by allowed followers. Users can also create a separate, professional account that they share with colleagues while keeping a personal account that is used for sharing information unrelated to professional development. Finally, Twitter allows people to view the site without creating an account, so librarians aren't required to create a Twitter account to reap the benefits of shared knowledge on the site. Some relevant Twitter accounts are listed below:

- American Library Association, @ALALibrary
- American Association of School Librarians, @aasl
- Young Adult Library Services Association, @yalsa
- Association for Library Service to Children, @alsc
- Project Ready, an equity- and youth-centered professional development curriculum for librarians, @Project_READY

Twitter's use of hashtags offers another benefit to those seeking to use the site for professional learning. Major conferences usually encourage participants to use a shared hashtag for tweets about the conference, which allows non-attendees to peek in on the events. For example, the hashtag for ALA's 2018 annual conference was #ALAAC2018. Hashtags are also the primary way that people follow and participate in Twitter Chats—pre-planned, online discussions on a particular topic, usually facilitated by an organization or group of individuals. You can search for particular hashtags within Twitter itself, or you can use a third-party service like TweetDeck to streamline the process and create an automatic feed of all tweets featuring a particular hashtag. See the feature box on the next page for a sample list of Twitter chats that may be relevant to public librarians.

DOCUMENTING YOUR CAREER GROWTH

Professional development is all about developing as a librarian and pushing your career forward. It's important that new skills are documented, and your résumé is a good place to keep track of new skills and experiences. Résumés should be updated on a regular basis, even if you aren't in the process of the searching for a job. Choosing a personal learning goal is one way to continue professional growth and connect with other professionals. For example, librarians who want to learn how to support youth of color and Native youth more effectively can connect on social media to discuss what they are doing in their libraries to champion youth equity. Writing down these goals and displaying them somewhere you will see them during work hours will help you hold yourself accountable for reaching them.

Selected Twitter Chats for Public Librarians

- #TLChat: Teacher-Librarian chat; second Monday of each month, 8-9 p.m. EST
- #EdChat: Education chat; every Tuesday, 12-1p.m. and 7-8 p.m. EST
- #CritLib: Critical library pedagogy chat; dates vary; check out http://critlib.org/twitter-chats/upcoming-twitter-chats/ for a schedule
- #Educolor: Activists of color in education chat; every fourth Thursday, 7:30 p.m. EST
- #SatChat: Best practices in education, Saturdays at 7:30 a.m. EST
- #YALitChat: Young adult literature chat, every Wednesday, 9-10 p.m. EST

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Professional development can be overwhelming when starting out as a youth services librarian. It is easy to assume the library school will teach students everything they need to know to be successful librarians, but many skills will come from on-the-job learning. This means that the first few years of librarianship may be stressful—and tacking on professional development can seem overwhelming. Candice Benjes-Small and Rebecca Miller (2017) offered advice to instructional librarians, saying that "professional growth is a marathon, not a sprint" and that taking on the role of a learner can help instructional librarians relate to their students

(2017, p. 171). Stress and time management are important skills to develop as a professional to prevent burnout.

STRESS AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Managing stress is important in preventing job burnout. Being overly stressed can lead to frustration with your job and could also lead to poor job performance. One way to manage stress is remembering to say no. While an opportunity may sound interesting, it isn't always possible to say yes to every webinar, program, or event. Having time to decompress and reflect on your learning is critical, which means that some opportunities will need to be passed up. Make sure to prioritize events that are more important or more closely related to topics you're interested in.

Another way to manage time and stress is by delegating responsibilities. If the library has more than one youth services librarian, it may be possible to share responsibilities or ask a colleague to take on a task if you are overwhelmed. Finally, it's important to define the boundaries are between your professional and personal life. Find out how quickly you are expected to respond to email when not at work and if you are expected to be on call when not at the library. While this may not be common in large library systems, small library systems with only one youth services librarian may require more responsibility during off hours.

CONCLUSION

Professional development is critical to growing as a youth services librarian. Connecting to others in the youth services community through professional organizations, conferences, and social media gives you the opportunity to discuss topics of interest

and best practice. By setting concrete goals for your growth, you can continue to provide excellent service and instruction to youth at your library.

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Chapter 12
Advocating for the Instructional Role

By Melissa Ferens

When many people think about youth services in public libraries, they think of books and storytime programs. As we have discussed earlier in this book, the idea that public youth librarians serve an instructional role can be surprising because there is a general lack of awareness of what it takes to be a librarian as well as the need for youth instruction outside of a school context. Public youth services librarians see themselves as proponents of literacy, youth development, and equitable access to resources, but even they don't necessarily see themselves as teachers or instructors.

This lack of awareness is understandable given the relatively recent surge of attention to the public librarian's instructional role. This surge is especially evident in the Young Adult Library Association's (YALSA) competencies for library staff. The most recent set, adopted by YALSA in 2017, includes entire content areas that are focused on instruction: "learning environments (formal and informal)," "learning experiences (formal and informal)," and "youth engagement and leadership." Each of these includes several points regarding developing, practicing, and transforming with respect to these content areas (YALSA,

2017a). The previous set of competencies, adopted in 2015, only includes a few references to instruction, such as "creates meaningful, skill-building volunteer and leadership opportunities for and with teens" and "recognizes teen expertise and creates ways for that expertise to be shared" (YALSA, 2015)."

Another reason for the general lack of awareness is a lack of visibility. Those who are most aware of instruction in public libraries are the librarians themselves, the youth and their families who are attending instructional programs, and other involved stakeholders; that is, those who are seeing instruction or its planning or outcomes firsthand. Potential collaborative partners, legislators, many of the youth and families in your community who could benefit from library programs, and even colleagues in your library may not be aware of how much time and knowledge of instructional best practices is required to plan and assess instructional programs, what informal instruction looks like in your everyday interactions with youth, or how your programs and informal instruction benefit youth (Benjes-Small, 2017).

A third reason for the lack of awareness is an image problem. People tend to think that libraries operate the same way as the ones they have experience with, and they may not have had experience with instruction in libraries or may not remember what they learned from it (Rawson, 2017). Public librarians may not have taken coursework that emphasized or even mentioned instruction, and, as a result, they may conceptualize their job without this focus. Even if someone does have some awareness about public youth service librarians as instructors, they may not understand or fully appreciate its value, or they may see it as a luxury for bigger libraries with more resources.

Due to these and other factors, there are not nearly as many librarians in public libraries embracing the instructional role as there should be, and the librarians who do instruct sometimes have difficulty obtaining resources for their instruction or attracting youth who would benefit from it. To effectively teach children and teens the 21st-century skills they will need to succeed, you need to help them become interested in using library services, attending programs, and talking with their librarians. You also need to build a network of collaborative partners and get funding for instructional initiatives, and that can only be done when those relevant parties know and value the work you do. In other words, being able to perform the other aspects of your job well depends on being an effective advocate.

WHAT ADVOCACY LOOKS LIKE

Advocacy is a critical part of youth librarianship; however, it does not have to be a separate part. As youth librarians, we already have a lot on our plate. We design and implement instructional programs, create assessment tools, write grants, help with circulation and collection development, help with library management and administration, perform readers advisory and other reference assistance, and collaborate with other educators and organizations. On top of all of that, advocating for the instructional role of public librarians can feel like a lot of extra work, but it doesn't have to be (Rawson, 2017).

Advocacy can take many forms, but at a minimum it should be incorporated in your everyday interactions and as a part of your everyday work. You can increase the visibility of your instructional work in your library, community, and professional

network by communicating frequently and effectively about what you do. Have conversations about the educational outcomes of your programs and informal instruction, create displays of projects youth have done in the library, and post what you're doing with youth on social media. This kind of advocacy, referred to by the American Library Association as "everyday advocacy" or "frontline advocacy," is simple but effective because of its potential to help people build a gradual but firm positive appreciation for the library (ALA, 2009). It's not about trying harder to serve the role of advocate on top of everything else you do; it's about trying differently (Nemec-Loise, 2015a).

Of course, if you have the time and are passionate about advancing youth instruction in public libraries, you can go beyond the level of everyday advocacy. For example, you could create campaigns, present at conferences, or arrange legislator visits to your library to show them firsthand how you work with youth and what they learn from public library instruction.

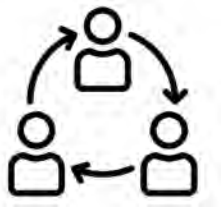
In addition to requiring different degrees of involvement, advocacy can also be targeted towards audiences on different levels. At the individual level, advocacy may involve increasing individual understanding of what the library can provide for someone or what they can gain from collaborating with a youth services librarian. It can also involve helping a fellow youth librarian learn techniques and new ways to perform their instructional role. Individual, personal interactions can be some of the strongest advocacy moments.

At the organizational level, advocacy can include actions such as arguing against budget cuts for the youth services department at staff meetings. Even within a library or community,

there are competing interests and priorities for limited resources (Benjes-Small, 2017). It can also include persuading your administration to hire new staff to handle some of the circulation and reference requests so that you can dedicate more time to instruction.

At the state or national level, advocacy can involve getting legislator support, convincing other public libraries to prioritize instruction in their strategic planning processes, and working along with professional organizations like YALSA, the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC), and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) that advocate for youth services as a major part of their mission (Rawson, 2017). Read about one public library that crafted and communicated an advocacy plan on multiple levels in the spotlight box below.

Spotlight: Advocacy in Action



Paul Sawyier Public Library in Frankfort, KY, is one of many public libraries that provides resources, programs, and services to help preschoolers develop early literacy skills. As a former preschool and kindergarten teacher, R. Lynn Baker, Youth Services Specialist at this library, felt a deep appreciation for the impact that public libraries have on kindergarten readiness and saw a need to advocate for

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public library services as resources to help preschoolers develop early literacy skills. In spring 2013, she proposed a program called Countdown to Kindergarten that ultimately inspired families, schools, and the other librarians to use and advocate for the public library as an important resource for school readiness.

Countdown to Kindergarten consists of two phases. The first phase takes place the fall before preschool children will enter kindergarten and provides information to parents about early literacy skills and kindergarten preparation. The second phase is a six-week spring program for children and their families to attend together that models early literacy practices through hands-on activities that families can practice at home. Participating families are also given a Countdown calendar that includes suggestions for monthly literacy activities to practice and books to read, a readiness checklist, and school registration information for the local schools.

Countdown to Kindergarten was developed collaboratively with local kindergarten, preschool, and daycare teachers to ensure that the most important school readiness skills were incorporated into the program; as another benefit of this collaboration, these teachers promote the program in their schools and daycares and at kindergarten registration events. Paul Sawyier Public Library youth services librarians were also able to establish relationships with participating families, as they came to appreciate the public library as an important educational resource through their ongoing involvement with the program.

To extend this advocacy to the state level, R. Lynn presented the program at the Kentucky Library Association/Kentucky Association of School Librarians Joint Conference in September 2013. Several public librarian attendees showed interest in collaborating with Paul Sawyier Public Library to implement the program in their own libraries. R. Lynn was then inspired to contact Heather Dieffenbach, the Children's and Youth Services Consultant at the Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, to suggest an initiative to develop state standards for school readiness programming and promote public library early literacy programming among school readiness services more generally. Heather was enthusiastic about the idea and worked to organize the Kentucky Public Library School Readiness Task Force, which met for the first time in November 2013.

R. Lynn then took her advocacy to the national level by submitting her story to the January 2014 issue of Everyday Advocacy Matters, a newsletter published by the Association for Library Services to Children (Baker, 2014).

KEEPING ADVOCACY MANAGEABLE

Advocacy is an ongoing effort. You cannot give anyone a full picture of what you do with instruction, how it benefits learners, and why those benefits are important with a single interaction, visit, or project (Kaaland, 2014). However, every interaction helps. Every time someone stops to look at a display you made to showcase patron learning, it helps. Every time you get a "like" on

an instruction-related social media post, it helps. Celebrate those small successes. On the other hand, remember that you can't reach everyone. You will miss some opportunities, and that's all right. In fact, it's better that not every conversation you have be about library instruction. Taking the time for personal conversation about family and weekend plans helps build relationships that can build a solid foundation for future advocacy (Benjes-Small, 2017). Additionally, trying to do everything will only lead to professional burnout. Keep your goals realistic and achievable (Nemec-Loise, 2014b).

Also remember that you are not alone. An essential part of advocacy is recruiting and inspiring others to help you with your advocacy efforts because you're ultimately working towards a community-wide or national mindset shift in terms of viewing public libraries as sites of learning and public librarians as experts integral to the success of youth. You have the potential to make a huge difference, but the fate of youth services does not rest on your shoulders alone, not even within your own library.

CREATING AND COMMUNICATING YOUR MESSAGE

Regardless of the form your advocacy takes—whether it's a campaign, a showcase of learner work, or anything else—you must have a clear idea of the message you want to communicate and to which audiences. Even when advocating spontaneously during regular conversation, if you make it an afterthought and try to improvise, you risk missing opportunities to create a strong message that aligns with what you want to accomplish. The following are some general guidelines to keep in mind to help you create and communicate this strong advocacy message. Each

interaction need not communicate the full message, but you should keep it in the back of your mind and draw from it when appropriate so that you will be able to communicate more coherently and purposefully (Benjes-Small, 2017).

Focusing Your Message

First, you need to have a strong understanding of your advocacy goals. What do you need to accomplish? What you advocate for should be unique to you, your library, and your community (Benjes-Small, 2017). For example, you may need to get approval for more part-time positions in the youth services department so that you can spend less time with circulation and reference and more time planning and executing programs. You may need to help local educational organizations see the value public libraries can provide as potential partners for creating services that have specific educational outcomes your community values.

An effective way to prepare yourself to articulate a focused, coherent message that will leave a strong impression on your audience is to create an elevator speech. The idea behind an elevator speech is to imagine that you only have a very brief amount of time to communicate your message, as if you were riding an elevator with someone (Benjes-Small, 2017). This forces you to be conscious of the most important points for making your

Craft an Elevator Speech

Check out the ALSC infographic *Creating an Elevator Speech: Using Value-Based Language to Advocate for Library Services to Children & Families*: https://bit.ly/2IKCISR

case so that you will avoid rambling and boring or confusing your audience.

Elevator speeches should use value-based language that expresses the impacts and outcomes of your work and not just the work itself (Nemec-Loise 2014b). To answer the question of what you do at the library, ALSC suggests the following template: "I help [target audience] [verb phrase] at the library so that [proven/expected positive outcome for target audience]" (ALSC, 2015, p. 1). For example, instead of saying "I do STEM programming for children," say "I create opportunities for children to ask questions about how the world works and help them build hands-on experiments to find the answers to those questions, which helps them develop a lifelong love of learning and the critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary to thrive in the face of current and future challenges."

Communicating Your Impact

Regardless of whether you're phrasing it as an elevator speech, your advocacy message should always focus on the benefit that public library instruction provides to youth. Communicate clearly how public library instruction supports youth learning and prepares them to succeed in the 21st century. If your message is that public libraries are important and need more funding, or anything that positions programs or youth services as ends rather that means, the message comes across as self-serving (Logan, 2014; YALSA, 2017).

Of course, explaining the benefits of instruction is even more powerful when you frame them in terms of fulfilling a community need (YALSA, 2017b). Most would agree that youth

education is a positive thing, but you should be prepared to explain how public libraries specifically help their communities by taking on this role, which hasn't been traditionally emphasized in public libraries. When budgets and schedules are already tight, what need warrants taking on this role? It also helps to frame your message in terms of what your public library is uniquely able to provide to the community and what skills you contribute as a youth librarian.

Also consider backing up your claims of the benefits youth get from instruction in your library with evidence, or letting the evidence speak for itself. Your message will be strongest if you can show, rather than just tell, what youth learn from public library instruction. Show the connection between strong programs and youth learning and success. School Principal Steven M. Baule recommended not focusing on the standards you will help learners meet, but instead emphasizing what learners can do because of instruction that they could not do before (Logan, 2014).

Tailoring Your Message for Specific Audiences

Tailor your message to your audience. Why should they care about what you have to tell or show them (Benjes-Small, 2017)? Think about what motivates your audience and what concerns, priorities, and interests they have. The information you give should also be specific, relevant, and actionable (McGarry, 2014). What do you want them to think, feel, and do (ALA, 2008)? Also find out what they already know and don't know about what you're advocating (Benjes-Small, 2017) and what they think about the role of the library (Gilmore-See, 2014). A parent who is actively looking for out-of-school enrichment opportunities for their

child would not necessarily need to be told why such opportunities are crucial for youth success, only what kinds of learning goals your library focuses on teaching kids around their child's age group. A parent who only brings their child to the library to find books and movies for entertainment might not be aware of the instructional role it serves.

Once you've decided on what ideas to communicate to your audience, think about how to make the message accessible. In most cases, your message should be short and sweet—easy to digest. YALSA recommends making your key message simple enough to be able to be expressed in 10 words or fewer (YALSA, 2017b). Even when writing a more involved document such as a grant proposal, your main points should be easy to discern. The easier and faster your message can be understood, the stronger it will be. If there is a lot of information you wish to communicate, consider giving it out in short segments, such as in a newsletter or a series of conversations or social media posts (McGarry, 2014). Be intentional with the language you use and avoid library and education jargon such as "pedagogy" that may be confusing to non-instruction librarians or non-educators (Benjes-Small, 2017).

While a commitment to evidence-based practice may lead you to value statistics, with everyday advocacy, fight against the instinct to bombard your audience with data to make your case. While one or two positive statistics can hook your audience (YALSA, 2017b), too many can create the impression that you are lecturing them. An overly

For More Ideas...

Explore the tips and resources in YALSA's Advocacy Toolkit document, online at https://bit.ly/2N4CEtF

informative message is not the most persuasive. Instead, you should aim for memorable. Hook your audience with a short, emotional story about the impact your library instruction has had for a specific learner or your community (Benjes-Small, 2017). It may help to keep a database with such stories and impact statements to draw from in your advocacy efforts (Nemec-Loise, 2014a).

INSPIRING OTHERS TO ADVOCATE

Your message will be more powerful if youth, parents, teachers, and other community members join you in advocating for public library instruction because this proves that the services you provide really do fulfill a major community need. Youth are the most persuasive advocates of all because they are the beneficiaries of instruction. Their quotes and examples of their work, especially when paired together, provide concrete evidence of learning. Asking youth about what they learned also has the additional benefit of allowing metacognition about learning to take place (Logan, 2014). One suggestion for using youth voices to speak about this that is especially appropriate for around Valentine's Day or Thanksgiving is to ask youth to write a sentence or two about why they love or are thankful for the library and to post those on a wall or bulletin board (Nemec-Loise, 2014b, 2015b). You can also collect comment cards throughout the year and use them in reports, presentations, and publications and on your website (YALSA, 2017b).

CONCLUSION

Advocacy is an essential part of public librarianship because we cannot serve the public without making them aware

of how we can fulfill their social, educational, and recreational needs or sharing with our professional community new understandings and best practices that help us better respond to new needs as they arise in our rapidly changing world. Currently, there is a strong push for youth librarians to perform an instructional role so that youth can the learn skills they need to succeed in the 21st century in an informal or non-formal, low-pressure, learner-driven environment that has different resources and norms than school. However, this role is still not widely known, even among youth librarians. Youth librarians need to advocate for their instructional role with youth themselves, parents, colleagues, the professional librarian community, collaborative partners, legislators, and other stakeholders so that they can look to the library as a resource to help them with their education-related goals.

While advocacy doesn't necessarily have to take a lot of extra time, there is a lot to keep in mind about how to create and communicate your advocacy messages in a way that allows you to best reach your audiences. Essentially, your message should:

- be based on your advocacy goals;
- communicate the value of what you do, especially as it relates to outcomes for youth and community needs;
- be tailored to your audience in a way that takes their context into account and lets them know why they should care; and
- be simple and clear with an emotional impact.

This may seem intimidating, but you are already an advocate every time you talk about the positive work you are doing with youth, every time you visit a school, and every time you put

learners' work on display (McClain, 2014). With practice, powerful advocacy will become second nature.

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Chapter 13
Conclusion

By Casey H. Rawson

The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.

— IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1994

Are public librarians educators? Should they be? We believe the answer to both of those questions is yes. Public librarians are distinct from classroom teachers in several key ways, and we are not arguing that the distinctions between these two professions should be eroded. However, not all learning occurs in formal classrooms, and not all teachers work in schools. We believe that there are instructional roles that public librarians can and should fulfill. As evidenced by the examples shared in this book, there are many public librarians who are already embracing this role, and many learners who are benefiting from their work.

The Public Library Association (PLA), a division of the American Library Association, offers this advice to those considering a career in the field:

> Forget what you think you know about public librarians. These days a librarian does a lot more than check out materials and shelve books. Technology expert, information detective, manager, literacy expert, trainer, community programming coordinator, reader's advisor, children's storyteller, material reviewer, and buyer are just a few of the hats a public librarian wears. A job in today's public libraries offers a diverse and exciting range of responsibilities, projects, and opportunities. (Public Library Association, 2011, para 1)

We agree that public librarians already wear many hats, and we acknowledge that it can be daunting to think about balancing yet another one on the pile—that of "educator." However, we believe that instead of being just another hat, the educator role can instead become the thread that binds all a public librarian's other hats together—making it easier to see the connections between the varied roles and strengthening the whole. Embracing the educator role is not necessarily about adding something to your practice, but rather about shifting your understandings of what you are already doing and your perceptions of the children and teens you serve.

For the field to make this shift, as school and academic librarians have done before us, several things are needed:

Research

In both the school and academic library fields, there is a large and growing body of academic research addressing questions such as:

- What does teaching and learning look like in this space?

- What is the curriculum that is taught here, and how does that relate to student learning standards developed by professional organizations within our field?
- What challenges do learners face when constructing knowledge about information literacy and other topics taught in our spaces?
- How can school and academic librarians effectively collaborate with other educators to improve student learning?
- How does existing research in the field of traditional education apply to the library setting?
- What does the planning process look like for school and academic librarians?
- How does the librarian's instructional role relate to, complement, and/or complicate her/his other roles and responsibilities (such as collection developer, manager, and information specialist)?
- What does culturally sustaining / culturally responsive teaching and learning look like in a school or academic library?

Historical research shows that in many cases, inquiry into best practices for instruction in school and academic libraries actually predated the widespread application of these ideas (Craver, 1986). For public libraries, too, the establishment of a body of research related to instruction in this setting and public librarians' role as educators, may encourage the field to move forward in this area. It is important to note that research does not have to be carried out only by academics—public librarians themselves can conduct and publish their own action research.

Advocacy

For instruction to become an accepted and expected part public librarians' jobs, other stakeholders must be aware that public librarians are capable of teaching valuable information and skills to library users. Penetration of this message among stakeholders such as pre-service public library educators, public library administrators, and parents will require sustained advocacy both from professional organizations, such as YALSA, and from individual public librarians already practicing this role.

Pre-service Training in Instructional Methods

If professional organizations and public library institutions expect public librarians to take on an instructional role, they must ensure that librarians receive training in this role as part of their MSLS programs. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science, where this textbook was written, students in the public library track are encouraged (though not required) to take a course in instructional methods titled *Instruction for Youth in School and Public Libraries*. Similar coursework could help prepare a new generation of public librarians who are equipped and motivated to develop and deliver high-quality instruction.

Support from Library Administrators

Planning instruction takes time and resources. To most effectively practice the instructional role, public librarians should have protected time available for them to develop and deliver instruction. Public library administrators can ensure that their

librarians have this time and other resources (such as physical materials) necessary to develop an instructional program.

Commitment, Courage, and Creativity

Public librarians who have already embraced the instructional role are participating in defining what that role will look like and what its impact will be. They often undertake this work not because a supervisor is pressuring them to, but because they believe it to be valuable. They do this work without clear guidelines, and often without guarantees of success. For public library instruction to become more widespread, we will need more committed, courageous, and creative librarians to take on this challenge.

The universe of what can be learned is infinite, and children and teens will only encounter a tiny sliver of it in the formal learning environments that structure most of their days. The public library can play a powerful role in expanding that universe for learners and in empowering them to take ownership of their own knowledge construction. But to do this effectively, we need to do it intentionally. We hope this text has given you the tools you need to turn your own intentions about instruction in the public library into realities.

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